

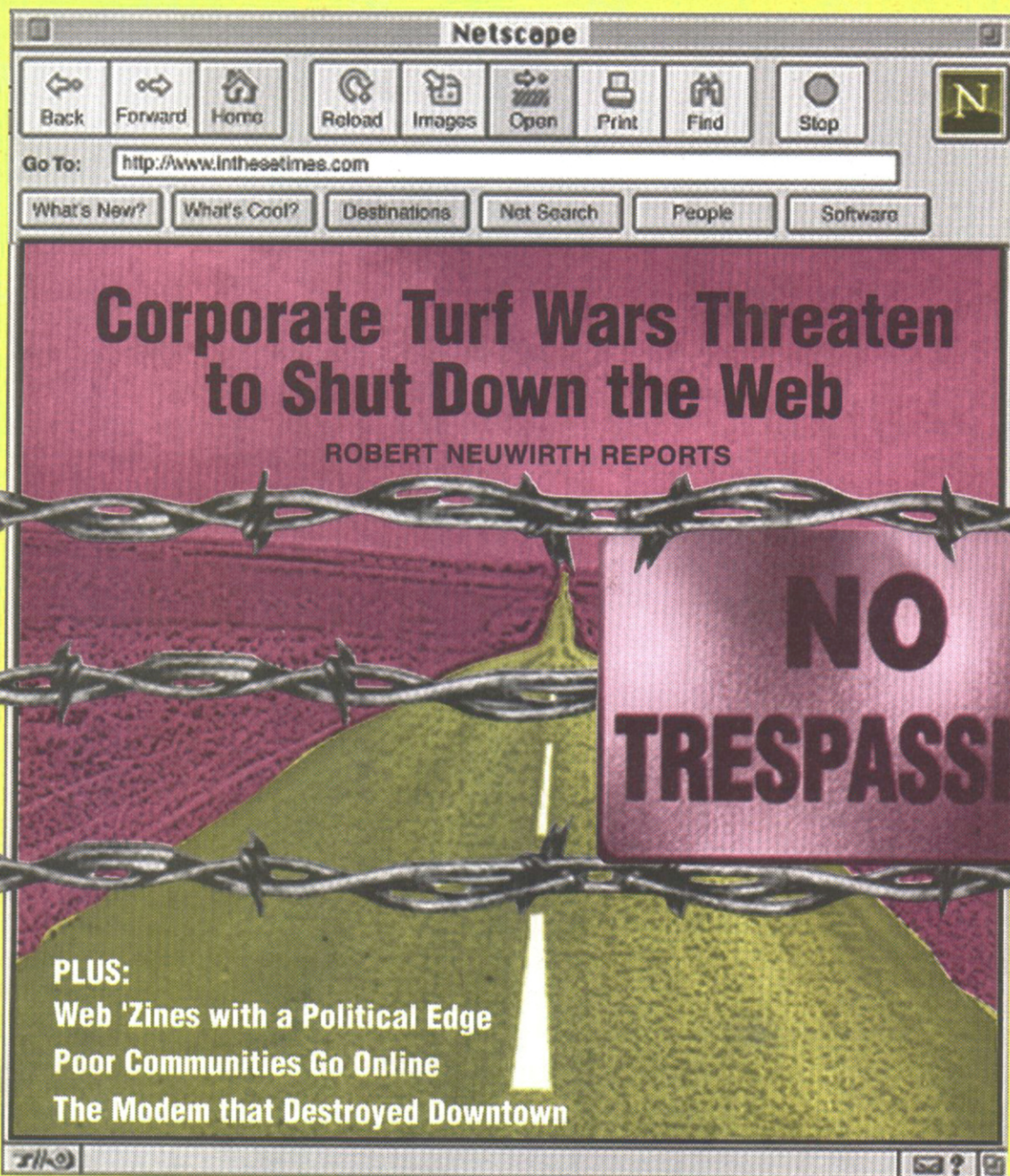
Juan Gonzalez's Forgotten America

CYBER
ISSUE

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

October 19, 1997



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Editorial

Security is a Two-Way Street

On her first trip to the Middle East as secretary of state this September, Madeleine Albright appeared to scold both sides evenhandedly. First, she lectured Yasser Arafat, insisting that he crack down on terrorists in his midst and stop the suicide attacks on Israel. Then, she implored Benjamin Netanyahu to ban further construction of settlements and access roads in the Occupied Territories and to stop bulldozing the homes of Palestinian families with ties to suspected terrorists—at least until peace talks resume. This surface neutrality could satisfy only the most gullible of observers.

Netanyahu has always been an outspoken enemy of the peace process, as well as of Arafat and Palestinian statehood. When he took office in May 1996, even the staunchly pro-Israel *New York Times* commented that Likud's victory would "badly delay, if not destroy, the dream of a wider peace." Since then, Netanyahu has been forced by international pressure to soften his rhetoric a bit, but he remains an adamant opponent of accommodation with the Palestinian people. He prefers abject surrender, and, beneath his few grudging remarks about peace, he makes no bones about it.

After the latest suicide bombing in a crowded pedestrian mall on September 4, Netanyahu blamed Arafat once again. But a strange thing happened this time. Not only did a prominent family member of one of the victims turn the blame back on Likud, but her remarks were admirably received by the Israeli public and stirred widespread debate.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan, who lost her 14-year-old daughter in the bombing, stated what—outside of Israel—should seem obvious. "The government breeds the terrorists," she said. "They start them off. ... They're the ones stealing [Palestinian] land, destroying the houses, uprooting the trees, erasing the villages. They're starving them, humiliating them, oppressing them."

The bombers, Peled-Elhanan said, cannot be controlled. As the promises of peace have

failed to materialize, the Palestinian Authority has lost support among its own people. "I don't think with the situation now they can do anything," she said of the Palestinian leadership. "They're on the verge of suicide, and we're pushing them to it."

Peled-Elhanan's reaction to the bombing is not totally surprising. She is, after all, the daughter of the late Maj. Gen. Mattiyahu Peled, a leader of the '70s peace movement, who advocated making peace with the Palestinians by allowing them to have a state alongside Israel. The surprise is that her remarks appear to have struck a chord with many Israelis.

According to a story in the *Chicago Tribune*, when a Jerusalem bus driver turned up the volume of an Israeli radio interview with Peled-Elhanan, the passengers—some of them moved to tears by her words—fell silent. Later, a steady stream of visitors, many of them strangers, stopped by her home in Jerusalem to express support for her and her views.

Fortunately, there seems to be a growing awareness among Israelis that attempts to pacify the Palestinians without recognizing their needs and desires can lead only to perpetual violence—as we have argued since we began publishing in 1976.

Albright and the Clinton administration, however, still don't get it. Their loyalties flow naturally to Israel, or at least to its lobbyists and fat cat donors in the United States. The United States must bear some of the responsibility for the steadily deteriorating situation. The peace process can only work if it is honestly enforced and if Israel moves steadily toward full acceptance of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Only the Clinton administration, the font of billions of dollars a year in economic and military assistance to Israel, has the kind of clout to force the government to change its ways. Sadly, Clinton prefers to sacrifice ordinary Israelis and Palestinians alike in pursuit of his own political gain. ■

*As long as the
Israeli government
continues to
humiliate the
Palestinian people,
some will lash out
in response.*



Cover illustration by Estelle Carol



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Letters

It's not easy being Green

The Green Party did not go back to sleep after the 1996 election as your editorial claimed ("Third Party Doldrums," August 24). The Green Party is very much alive and is offering the progressive left more of an alternative than it has had in years. There is evidence of major growth in the party here in Minnesota. The Greens ran a candidate for state legislature last fall. He lost to a nine-term Democrat but outpolled the Republican candidate. Because of this effort (and because the Nader-LaDuke ticket received 5 percent of the vote here), the Green Party has earned minor-party status, qualifying it for the contribution reimbursement offered by the state. This year we have endorsed nine local candidates for city council and park board, and several incumbents also sought out our endorsement. We are gradually becoming a force on the local and state political scene.

Other states also are running candidates for a variety of offices. Most are still losing—but not all. The city council of Arcata, Calif., for example, is now dominated by Greens. As this growth continues, you can count on hearing much more from the Green Party.

Betsy Barnum
Minneapolis

For you to say that Ralph Nader's campaign was never serious is outrageous. At least I was able to vote for something I believed in. The Nader campaign was dependent on individuals like me to spread the word. Additionally, it brought about a dozen of us together to form the Iowa City Green Party. Today we have about 30 dues-paying members and are growing gradually.

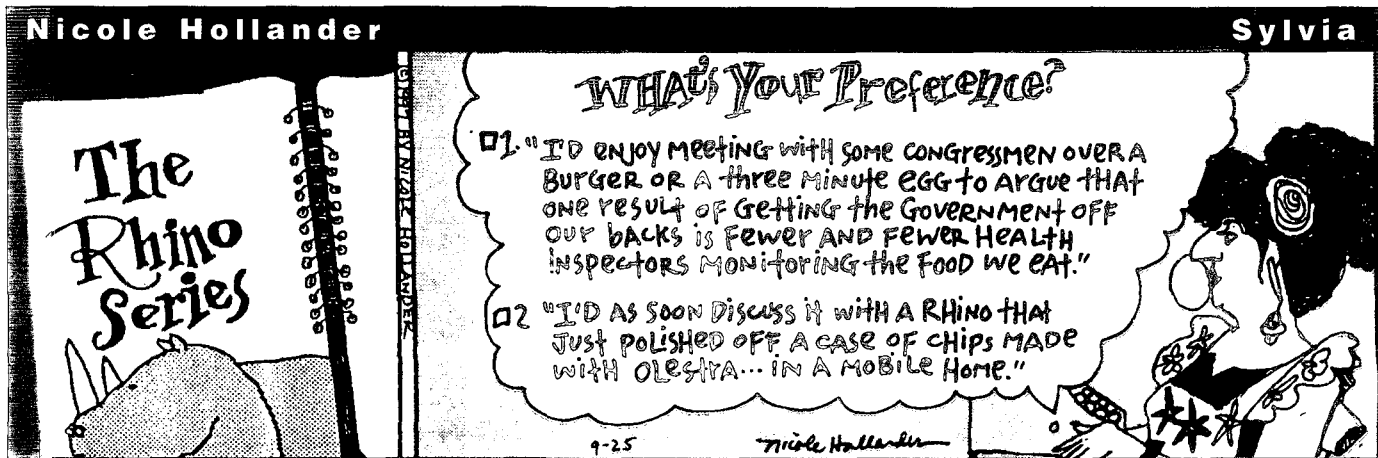
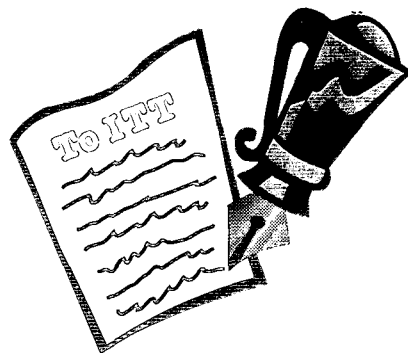
I am a Green candidate for a city council seat this year. In June, we assisted a liberal Democratic candidate in her victory over a conservative Democrat in a special election for Johnson County recorder. A willingness to help good Democrats get elected doesn't marginalize the Iowa City Green Party. It certainly doesn't place us outside of your much vaunted "mainstream."

Russell Lovetinsky
Iowa City, Iowa

The parties you refer to as having caught "election fever" are hardly "quadrennials." None of them ran a presidential candidate four years ago. Nor is there a "Green Party" or a Ralph Nader party. The Green Party USA had no interest in electoral politics until Nader announced his run and they saw a way to cash in, literally, if he got 5 percent of the vote. State-based Green parties and Greens did, however, get him on the state ballot in 20 states. The Alliance for Democracy has never

described itself as an electorally oriented organization. And the Labor Party, as you point out, won't run candidates because they still have illusions about reforming the Democratic Party, to which their leaders have strong ties.

Moreover, your totally unsubstantiated conclusion—that only the New Party has "the potential for the left to enter the mainstream of American political life with an agenda of its own"—sounds like whistling in the dark to me. The New Party, at least here on Long Island, is attached like a lampprey to the Democratic Party, while pretending to have a more "left" agenda. Running local candidates is pretty safe for them because often there aren't Democrats running in suburban or rural races anyway. You were absolutely on the mark by saying that the New Party will have to start addressing "the issues that affect all of us as a nation." On the leading issues facing Long Island—the radioactive contamination from the Brookhaven National Laboratory (a Superfund site) and the Army Corps of Engineers' pork-barrel scam to destroy Long Island's South Shore barrier-island ecosystem—the New Party is playing it as safe and conservative as the



Detters

national Democratic Party.

I would put my money on a national Green Party coming out of the newly formed Association of State Green Parties, comprised so far of 20 state-wide Green parties. Green politics will firm up only through such state Green parties, not by any top-down national structure.

See you in four years.

Lorna Salzman
Co-founder.

**New York State Green Party
East Quogue, N.Y.**

Editor's note: Our editorial was about the disappearance from the national scene of the groups that emerged briefly in 1996, as they do every four years. It was not intended as a criticism of the local work of various Green parties. We have always supported and encouraged such activity. We regret any implication to the contrary.

Austin Power

I found your swipe at the Alliance for Democracy ("Third Party Doldrums," August 24) a little self-serving. I understand that the New Party is doing rather well in Chicago. But just because the Alliance is new and has yet to make a serious impact on the federal political scene is no reason to trash it.

I'm a member of the New Party, and I'm pleased to see they've already begun organizing in Houston. Although their living-wage initiative failed 3-to-1, they probably have a bright future in Texas.

But Ronnie Dugger and the Austin chapter of the Alliance have made an impact here. The chapter is growing steadily and already has taken action on international labor exploitation and NAFTA. We will soon be taking action on local campaign-finance reform as well.

Michael McPhail
Austin, Texas

Say it ain't so, Joel

How depressing Joel Bleifuss' piece on Cuba was ("90 miles away," August 24)! Not the compromises forced on Cuba by over three decades of attack from abroad, or the militarization of socialism in the face of capitalist encirclement. But the fact that Bleifuss feels compelled to jump on

the Castro-bashing bandwagon with every other infantile leftist chasing a vacuous mainstream legitimacy.

Every serious progressive in this country should be lending support to the defense of Cuba's revolution. There are plenty of demagogues on the right ready and willing to assist the continuing attack against it. Ironical poses like Bleifuss' article surely delight Cuba's enemies. Perhaps Senator Helms can send him a thank-you note.

Stan Goff
Raleigh, N.C.

The colors Joel Bleifuss attributes to the Cuban flag are actually those of the Puerto Rican flag. The flags are identical but for their reversed colors. Cuba's flag has its star on a red background and blue stripes.

Bleifuss says Cubans who acquire dollars can improve their material lives. Quite true. It is also true that many have families in the United States who send money. What he fails to point out, however, is that for them to do so is a violation of U.S. law; it is illegal to send dollars to Cuba.

He also says Cubans told him that "Cas-

tro needs the embargo to justify the present state of affairs." If anyone in Washington believed that, there would be no embargo. Washington's aim has been to extend to Cuba the political and economic domination it exercises over the rest of Latin America.

I've been reading *Granma Internacional* and listening to Radio Habana since the '60s. Cuba has never made any claim that Mikhail Gorbachev was any kind of CIA agent (single or double). Surely the tropical sun went to Bleifuss' head. And his parting shot that Cubans buy two copies of *Granma* to sell one (to whom?) and use the other as toilet paper is contemptible.

Julia Lutsky
Woodside, N.Y.

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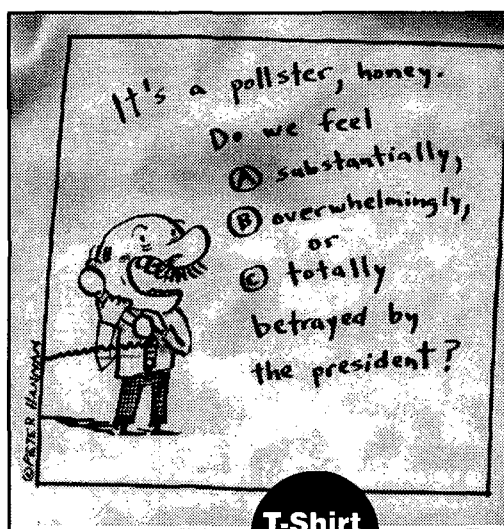
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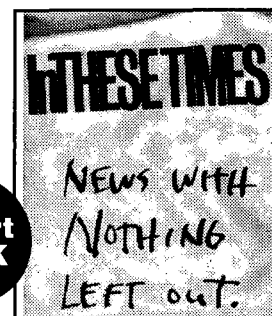
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chemical weapons

It's a Gas, Gas, Gas

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Frightening legacies of the Cold War continue to linger on the home front. During the '60s, the U.S. Army manufactured more than a million nerve gas rockets, bombs and mines, and now it is facing the problem of how to dispose of these lethal weapons before they begin to leak or, as one Army report warns, self-detonate.

Following the advice of defense contractors, the Army decided to destroy the nation's nerve gas arsenal in a system of experimental incinerators. The disposal of chemical weapons promised to be a lucrative business, totaling perhaps \$20 billion in contracts. It also quickly proved to be a dangerous decision.

In August 1996, the first of eight planned incinerators began operating in the Utah desert near Tooele, a small ranching town outside Salt Lake City. The Tooele plant was immediately plagued by a series of mishaps and malfunctions, including at least eight releases of the deadly nerve gas sarin. The facility's manager and environmental engineer also were fired after raising questions about the safety of the incinerator.

As the problems mounted, the Army started damage control. In May, the Army gave a guided tour of the Tooele plant to a group of 40 congressional staffers and civic leaders from Oregon and Kentucky, where future chemical weapons incinerators—clones of the Tooele plant—are slated for construction.

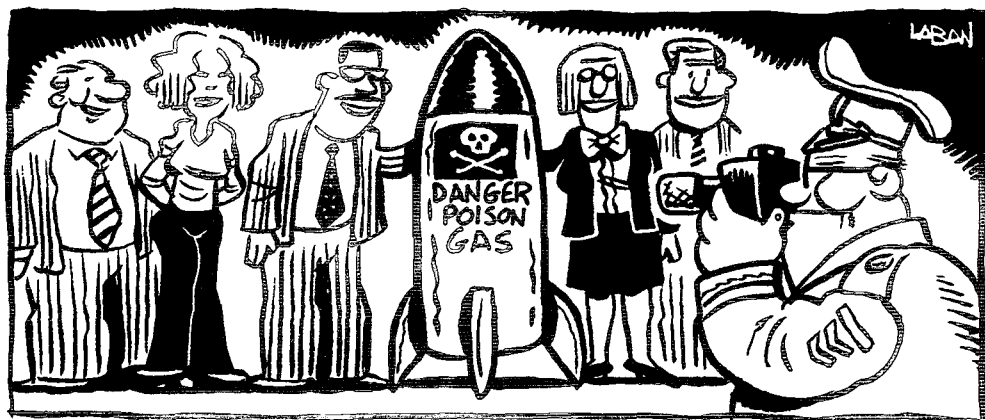
The public relations gesture backfired on the generals. At one point in the tour, Army officers showed the delegation a

shell casing from a supposedly decontaminated MC-1 nerve gas bomb. The bomb was inspected at close range by the group, which had not been issued protective clothing. A few hours after the group left Tooele, the Army tested the shell casings and discovered the presence of sarin gas.

Instead of declaring "a chemical event"—which would have notified federal and state environmental agencies and triggered immediate medical attention for the tour group—the Army covered up the mishap. The bomb parts

days later, the mayor of Hermiston, Ore. (the nearest community to the planned Umatilla chemical weapons incinerator) received an anonymous call warning him that he had been exposed to nerve gas during the Tooele tour. The Army stayed quiet.

Only on June 4, five days after the tour, did the Army contact members of the group to inform them of the incident. While members of the Oregon delegation were advised to have their blood checked for nerve agents, the members of the delegation from Kentucky (site of



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were discreetly wrapped in plastic, stuffed into a metal container and moved to a storage area for "hot" materials.

The next day, an anonymous caller tipped off the Utah Department of Environmental Quality about the dangerous Tooele tour. Department officials called the Army, which confirmed the information but said the accident was inconsequential. Only after the call, according to an internal Army memo, did officials reclassify "the agent detection within the bombs as a 'chemical event.'"

Still the Army took no action. Two

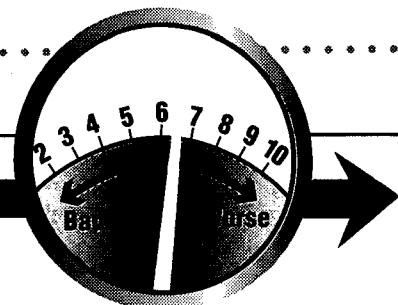
the proposed Bluegrass incinerator near Richmond) were simply told that if they didn't feel sick after a week, they would be fine.

"The whole affair is abysmally stupid," says Oregon congressman Peter DeFazio, whose staff member was exposed to sarin. "If the safety of the group touring Tooele can't be assured, how can people trust the Army to protect their safety near these incinerators. This is a dubious technology that's extremely expensive and dangerous. A real mistake." ■

appall-o-meter

BY DAVID FUTRELLE

The In These Times Index of Indecencies



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Death of a Princess 8.4

It must have seemed like a good idea at the time. A recent ad campaign launched by Weight Watchers depicted Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, telling potential customers that losing weight was "harder than outrunning the paparazzi." Oops. As the *Washington Post* notes, the campaign has been scrapped in light of recent events—but not before tens of thousands of brochures featuring the untimely phrase made it into the mail.

Meanwhile, a North Carolina radio station found itself fending off angry calls after a local psychic, appearing as a guest on a morning show, took on a British accent and claimed to be "channeling" Princess Diana in her final

moments. "I don't have control over my response," the psychic, Mary Beth Wrenn, later told The Associated Press. "I can't edit them. Diana was talking about her causes, her support of [banning] land mines and so forth, and then [radio show host] Luke [Allen] began asking about the death."

Art To Go 5.3

Forget those fusty museums and snobby galleries. According to a recent report in London's *Sunday Telegraph*, the place to look for hot new art in England these days is the Art Supermarket, a sort of point-of-purchase gallery that's recently popped up in the posh Harvey Nichols store in Knightsbridge, "sandwiched between flowers, bottles of wine and chocolates on the top floor." The Art Supermarket has done so well, racking up nearly \$1.6 million in sales last year, that Harvey Nichols plans to open three more in other stores around the country. And what qualities do the, er, curators of the Art Supermarket look for in their painters, who are expected to turn out 15 new works a month? "Speed is something I'd mention early on," a spokesman for the company told the *Telegraph*, "but it is not all important."

Ask Not For Whom The Phone Tolls 8.1

A number of former Californians—former in the sense of being dead—were apparently so eager to change their long distance companies that they crawled out from their graves to sign the necessary forms, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports. According to some less-than-thrilled survivors, sales agents working for National Telephone & Communications Inc. forged the signatures of their dead relatives to make the unauthorized switches. "I told my attorney he must have come back from the dead to sign this," one woman told the *Chronicle* after she discovered the forged John Hancock of her late husband. A spokeswoman for the company blamed the problem on "overeager sales reps." The California Public Utilities Commission has ordered an investigation. ■

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labor

AFL-CIO Survey Says Women Want Equal Pay

BY CRAIG AARON

Equal pay is the top concern of working women, according to a survey released by the AFL-CIO to kick off the first major campaign of its Working Women's Department.

"Women are saying, 'Pay us what we're worth and we'll take care of the rest,'" says Karen Nussbaum, the former director of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department who was tapped by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney to head the Working Women's Department last year.

Ninety-four percent of women surveyed listed equal pay as very important,

though nearly a third said their jobs didn't provide it. When asked to name the biggest problem facing women at work, white women singled out equal pay. However, African-Americans cited low pay as a bigger problem, Latina respondents worried about balancing work and family, and Asian-Americans were most concerned with discrimination.

The survey signals a new emphasis for the AFL-CIO on women, who comprise nearly 40 percent of its membership. In the rapidly expanding service economy, women are the most active organizers and the most receptive to the

idea of collective action.

Nussbaum's mandate is to extend labor's message not just to unionized women but to all women in the work force. She says her department will soon launch national grass-roots campaigns on equal pay and childcare.

"The findings will be used in many ways—promoting legislation, at the bargaining table and to reinforce organizing," Nussbaum says. "These results allow us to show that the demands of one group on the local level aren't just rantings. They represent the views of working women nationwide." ■

Oregon Considers Proportional Voting

BY PATRICK MAZZA

Third parties are caught in a conundrum that makes it nearly impossible for them to become serious contenders. In winner-take-all elections, it is hard to persuade people to vote for candidates with almost no chance of winning. But an odd-bedfellows coalition in Oregon is attempting to give third parties a boost through an unprecedented initiative campaign to elect the State House by proportional representation.

Proportional representation prevailed in many cities across the country from the Progressive reform era early in the century until the reactionary rollbacks of the '40s and '50s. Now it is enjoying a resurgence of interest. A referendum to elect the San Francisco City Council by proportional representation was narrowly defeated last year, drawing 44 percent of the vote. What makes Oregon different, says Steven Hill of the Center for Voting and Democracy (CVD), is that it represents the first contemporary effort to institute proportional voting for a state legislative body.

The ballot measure initiated by the Pacific Party, Oregon's Green Party, has drawn support from the Libertarian and Socialist parties. The three parties are seeking to place the measure before voters in November 1998. They are about to kick off a signature-gathering drive and have until next July to secure 98,000 signatures for a place on the ballot.

In effect, the initiative would turn Oregon into one giant legislative district, electing all 60 House members statewide. One-sixtieth of the vote, approximately 1.7 percent, would elect one representative. Each party would offer a list of up to 60 candidates. If the Democrats drew half the statewide vote, the top 30 people on the party list would take seats in the legislature. If the Pacifics won 3.5 percent of the vote, the first two names on their list would take seats.

Both Pacifics and Libertarians have attracted over 1.7 percent each in

statewide races. Third parties expect to draw more if every vote counted for legislative representation. "Under the current system, maybe 51 percent of voters get representation," says campaign coordinator Blair Bobier. "Under proportional representation, 98 percent will be sure to elect someone."

Since the end of geographic districts in the State House is controversial, the initiative's drafters preserved districts in the Senate to counter criticism. Ironically, a CVD survey shows that the ratio of Democrats to Republicans in the State House is fairly reflective of the actual vote. It is in the Senate where winner-take-all has its most uneven effect. Twenty of its 30 members, 66 percent, are Republicans although they won only 52 percent of the vote. But the House was selected for the initiative because its larger numbers increase the odds that small parties would gain seats.

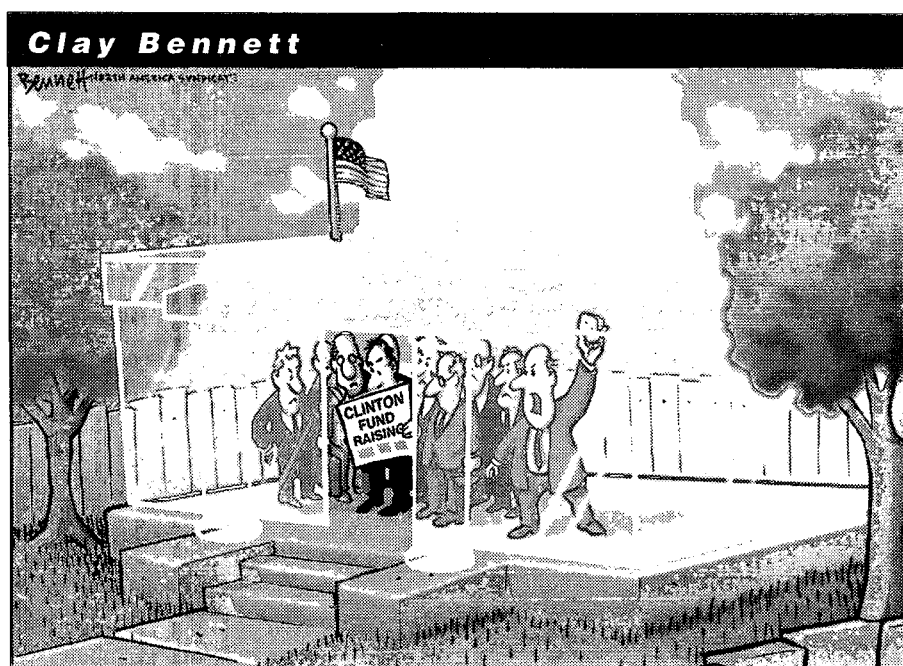
Freed from lowest-common-denominator politics, Oregon's legislature would blossom with innovative propos-

als, say advocates of proportional representation. "Smaller parties are laboratories for new ideas," Hill says. "They push them into the mainstream."

While there is no declared opposition yet, Bobier anticipates resistance from politicians in both major parties who are comfortable with the status quo, particularly the Republicans, who control the legislature. Meanwhile, initiative supporters are actively courting labor, which stands to gain if Oregon's embryonic Labor Party gets off the ground.

Whether Oregon voters are ready to embrace such a profound change is highly uncertain. But the campaign is introducing them to an unfamiliar concept, which is now earning a great deal of statewide coverage. Bobier holds out the possibility of victory. "It depends on who gets behind it," he says. "A lot of people have a stake in seeing this passed." ■

Patrick Mazza is the editor of Cascadia Planet (www.tnews.com), a Web site covering the Pacific Northwest.



"...I say we stone him!..."

Conservative Charity Reform

BY JEFFERSON DECKER

This summer, the National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal began circulating a 132-page report entitled "Giving Better, Giving Smarter: Renewing Philanthropy in America." The commission, which was underwritten by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and chaired by former Tennessee governor and Republican presidential hopeful Lamar Alexander, proposes to end philanthropy as we know it.

"Giving Better," which the commission is now peddling to politicians and media figures across the country, is critical of contemporary giving patterns, calling Americans "haphazard" and "non-strategic" when it comes to giving away money. Americans need to be as exacting about where they donate charity dollars as they are about where they invest their savings or purchase consumer products, the report argues.

The commission also takes direct aim at government. It argues that philanthropies spend too much time trying to qualify for federal and local funds, getting bogged down by "regulations, procedures, and norms" in the process.

"Large charities spend a lot of time fixating on what goes on in Washington," says John Barry, the commission's research associate.

The report further disparages public-private ventures designed to test "broad social theories" or possible public policy initiatives—a long-time strategy of liberal donors such as the Ford Foundation. The commission advises donors and volunteers to focus on limited, obtainable objectives instead.

Of course, the Bradley Foundation made its name by funding some "broad social theories" of its own. Having pumped millions of dollars into public-policy think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute, Bradley is rightly considered a foundation father of welfare reform. "There is a big contradiction between what Bradley is doing and what the Alexander report recommends donors be doing," says Sally Covington of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

Hypocritical or not, the report makes clear that Bradley hopes to give charity a new modus operandi. Programs designed to "sustain"

people are out; those that actively seek to "improve" people are in. Donors are discouraged from opening their wallets out of "goodwill," but are encouraged to be "civic entrepreneurs," who, like financial investors, "expect something in return."

"We're applying practices that were developed in business schools to charity work," explains Barry. "But people tend to think of philanthropy as a different kind of activity." ■

Berkeley's Funny Money

BY DEIDRE MCFADYEN

Berkeley, Calif., has long been a test tube for progressive social experiments. A few years back, the city started giving homeless beggars coupons redeemable in local shops. Now, a group of residents has introduced a new local currency to take the place of U.S. dollars.

"Corporations are coming into our communities and draining them of their resources," says Miyo Sakashita, who founded the group along with Jyl Safier. "A local currency keeps money in the local economy and promotes community self-reliance."

One BREAD (Berkeley Region Exchange and Development) hour has a value of \$12, which is redeemable for that amount of labor or an equivalent value in goods. Since BREAD was introduced in May, organizers have signed up 77 people offering goods and services ranging from carpentry and catering to desktop publishing and pet care. So far \$1,848 worth of BREAD has entered circulation.

"With BREAD, people get to meet their neighbors," Sakashita says. "We feel alienated from other people. This is a way to discover resources within our community."

The group wants to get local farms and urban community gardens involved in the project so members can buy locally grown food. It is also giving out small grants to community organizations.

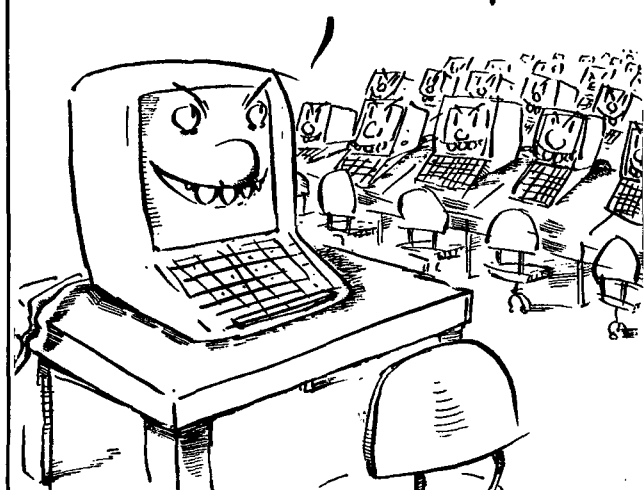
BREAD is only the newest of 40 local currency projects nationwide. The granddaddy of them all is in Ithaca, N.Y., where a local currency was launched in 1991. \$63,000 worth of Ithaca HOURS are now in circulation.

What does Uncle Sam have to say about all this? It turns out there's no law against printing a local currency. The government's only caveat is that residents pay sales tax with their regular greenbacks. ■

Peter Hannan

Huge Mouth

God I'm bored. What say we all fake a virus?



©1990 Peter Hannan



Di-lusional Coverage

BY MILES HARVEY

Don't feel bad if the mainstream media's coverage of Princess Diana's death made you feel as if you, too, were being dragged helplessly along on a ride gone terribly out of control. High on sentiment, low on sentience, the interminable hype surrounding the "Celebrity Funeral of the Century" was a maelstrom of contrasting messages and images. You had tabloid TV's **Hard Copy** attacking the "stalkerazzi" while "legitimate" news outlets like **Time**, **Newsweek** and the **New York Times** ran their own paparazzi shots to illustrate stories about the princess. Then there was the hypocrisy of network commentators bemoaning Diana's lack of privacy while simultaneously condemning the royal family's initial decision to mourn without photo-ops.

For more intelligent perspectives, you had to turn to the alternative media. Luckily, online magazines like **Feed** (www.feedmag.com) and **Salon** (www.salonmagazine.com), with their day-to-day analysis of breaking events, were more than ready for the challenge.

In **Feed**'s September 8 edition, for example, editor-in-chief Steven Johnson lamented the media's fascination with monarchy at a time when "kings and queens are as obsolete as alchemy and bloodletting." "Being a good king at this late date," he concluded, "is indistinguishable from being a good celebrity, something Diana seemed to grasp years before the rest of her clan. The Windsors may be one of the world's richest families, but they are powerful now by virtue of being famous. Divine rights have never looked more like broadcast rights—and that, more than anything, may turn out to be Diana's most insidious legacy."

Another fine perspective on the story actually appeared months before the princess died and never mentioned her

name. In the June issue of **American Journalism Review**, James McCartney's cover story, "News Lite," looked at how the network news broadcasts—pressured by a sharply declining viewership—have shifted to a tabloid-oriented approach that emphasizes lurid celebrity stories such as the O.J. Simpson and JonBenet Ramsey cases, while giving less effort and smaller time slots to hard news. "It is a trend that has been underway for several years, but that has escalated sharply in the last 12 months," wrote McCartney, whose article made you realize that the media's coverage of Di's death, like the fatal car ride itself, was a disaster waiting to happen.

As the broad public support for the recent Teamsters strike makes clear, Americans are becoming fed up with an economy increasingly dependent on part-time and temporary jobs. This comes as no surprise to aficionados of the nation's 'zines, those quirky exercises in self-publishing, several of which devote themselves to the perils of the new low-pay, low-security workplace.

Issue No. 10 of **Temp Slave** (P.O. Box 8284, Madison, WI 53708-8284), for example, featured several angry articles

by disaffected workers, including Mickey D., a temp for the San Francisco Department of Elections, who saw his ill-trained, ill-paid counterparts "maul" important election documents, including ballots. "The city refuses to pay for permanent employees, and as a consequence, gets what it pays for," he wrote. **Temp Slave** is overwhelmingly cynical about traditional politics. Its idea of direct action is "stealing postage from the [employer's] stamp machine, sending faxes and making long-distance phone calls, stealing office supplies for home use, using the copy machine for personal use, and typing personal letters on company time."

Other 'zines take a more positive approach. In issue No. 14 of **Dishwasher** (P.O. Box 8213, Portland, OR 97207), editor/cult figure Dishwasher Pete wrote a detailed history of unions representing dishwashers in New York from 1912 on. "The need is just as great now as it was in 1912 for dishwashers to fight the bosses with the power of a union," he wrote—one indication that with the right kind of organizing, labor might be able to convert the anger of America's newest class of alienated workers into action. ■

online

- **Oyez Oyez Oyez** (court.it-services.nwu.edu/oyez/) offers bite-size summaries of the key constitutional questions at stake in hundreds of historical cases as well as biographies of every justice to sit on the Supreme Court. But the best part is the hundreds of hours of digital recordings of oral arguments and opinion announcements culled from the National Archives.
- The next **Martin Scorsese** is waiting to be discovered at the **Independent Feature Project** (www.ifp.org). A valuable resource for aspiring independent filmmakers and fans, this site features a calendar of indie screenings and festivals, info about films in production and profiles of important players on the scene.
- Where is the personal always political? **Feminist Heaven**, of course. This Oklahoma-based site has lots of feminist and pro-choice links and a nice selection of news articles. In **Heaven** (members.aol.com/okamwoc/heaven.html), you'll also find answers to eternal questions like "is [the puppet] Lambchop a feminist?"

Visit **In These Times** online at www.inthesetimes.com

labor

'Poverty Tour' Takes Wellstone to Kentucky

BY PAT ARNOW

It's been 30 years since a senator from outside of the Appalachians came to Eastern Kentucky to listen to coal miners. And what Minnesota Democrat Paul Wellstone heard on a stop of his national "Poverty Tour" shocked him.

"I'm convinced that most people in this country—and I'm absolutely convinced that most people in Congress—think that what you're describing is something that took place 50 years ago," Wellstone told a group of eight miners and one young widow he met in Hazard, Ky., on August 29.

Rita St. Clair, the 27-year-old widow of a miner, recounted the story of how her husband was electrocuted after being told to repair a piece of equipment on which he was not certified to work. He had pleaded not to be assigned tasks for which he was not qualified, she reported. Mike Hoskins told Wellstone he was fired after 16 years as a miner simply because he took a short break in an eight-hour shift to remove an uncomfortable rubber and plastic mask. Larry Hatton said he lost his job for complaining about coal dust so thick that he could not see the remote control in front of him on the continuous mining machine he was operating.

These conditions are typical in the largely non-union mines of Eastern Kentucky, says Tony Oppegard, an attorney who represents miners who are fired for refusing to work under unsafe conditions. Miners are afraid to speak out because they often lose their jobs, says Oppegard, who organized the meeting with Wellstone.

One of the biggest problems in the mines is coal dust. "Dust not only causes black lung, but it's an explosion hazard," Oppegard says.

left politics

Labor Party Promotes '28th Amendment'

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

Over the past six months, Labor Party organizers have been going door-to-door in 26 cities with a petition advocating passage of a constitutional amendment to guarantee the right to a job at a living wage of \$10 an hour. The campaign follows the success of more limited local living-wage proposals in places like Minneapolis.

The party plans to collect signatures in support of the so-called "28th Amendment" from 10 percent of the registered voters in targeted electoral districts in cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Then, signatures in hand, organizers will solicit support for the amendment from elected officials in those districts.

Party officials say the petition drive will help them reach out to the politically disenchanted. "People aren't numbed politically, they are just numbed at the lack of representation," says Tony Mazzocchi, the party's interim national organizer. "But when there is a message that resonates, they are willing to be engaged."

The Labor Party was founded in June 1996 on the notion that the interests of working people are not being served by either the Republicans or the Democrats. It was strengthened this past summer by the addition of two large unions, the American Federation of Government Employees and the United Mineworkers, as dues-paying members.

Although it has the support of 52 chapters and more than 300 union locals, the party is not running candidates for elected office. At least, not yet. "The campaign is teaching people patience and to take the long view," Mazzocchi says. "Organizing is not an overnight phenomenon. To build an alternative party that is going to last, you do it one step at a time." ■

Currently, mine owners track their own dust levels, which they consistently report as within federal standards. Oppegard says the government uses the reports of clean air, which he calls a "farce," as evidence that miners cannot be getting black lung. He says only 5 percent of miners collect on their claims for black lung benefits.

The visit with the miners was one stop on Wellstone's cross-country investigation into the living conditions of

poor people. Like Robert F. Kennedy's tour in 1967, Wellstone's trip may be a test of the presidential campaign waters.

But the meeting galvanized the senator to support legislation funding new federal safety inspectors. Upon return to the Senate, Wellstone spoke in favor of a Labor Department appropriations bill to hire 24 federal inspectors to monitor coal dust.

The appropriations bill awaits approval of the full Congress. ■

What's in a Name

BY LOIS TOMAS

For 42 years, Erwin High School has been the "Home of the Warriors and Squaws."

Now Native Americans in Asheville, N.C., are pushing to change the names of the school's sports teams. They are most offended by the use of "squaw," which refers to a woman's pelvic area and means whore or prostitute in some native languages.

"The issue itself is clear," says Vernon Bellecourt of the American Indian Movement (AIM). "The word 'squaw' has got to go in all its forms. It's demeaning and degrading to Indian women and all women."

But some Erwin High alumni see things differently. They argue that the name should be kept because it's a community tradition. "The name should not be changed after so many years because a certain group is offended," says Bob O'Connor of the Erwin Booster Club.

Tradition is no excuse, says Bruce Two Eagles, one of the Asheville residents calling for a change. "Forty-two years ago, I couldn't drink out of the same water fountain as white people," he says. "I had to ride in the back of the bus. There was no sensitivity to this issue."

Erwin High is only the tip of the iceberg, Bellecourt says. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, more than 1,000 sites nationwide have "squaw" in their name, including 189 in Oregon alone. Native American activists are calling for a national solution. Last year they submitted a request to the Federal Board on Geographic Names to ban the word "squaw." A similar ban was enacted in 1963, changing the name at 143 sites from "Nigger" to "Negro."

Minnesota, which has a large Native American population, already banned the word "squaw" in 1996. Inspired by two Native American women, who were campaigning to change the name of



towns in their area, the state mandated that all geographical features named "squaw" be renamed. So far, 8 of 23 sites have been changed.

A school district in Southern California also recently decided to eliminate the use of American Indian mascots. But that decision has had little effect on the Erwin controversy. In North Carolina, at least ten other schools use American Indian mascots, including one on the nearby Cherokee reservation. Erwin

is the only one that uses a separate name for the women's teams.

The Buncombe County Board of Education is leaving the decision to the high school. Erwin Principal Mal Brown supports changing the name, but wants the students to play a role in the decision. "I feel we should make the change, but it should come from the students," she says. "If [cultural sensitivity] is forced down their throats, the students won't learn anything from this."

According to School Superintendent Bob Bowers, a decision may not be reached until next year. "We're teaching students to look at issues and take leadership roles in resolving them," he says. "I'm optimistic that this will continue to work and help them examine the differences in people and cultures."

Two Eagles has vowed to sue the school if the name isn't changed. ■

Lois Tomas is a freelance journalist living in North Carolina.

Jennifer Berman



One Strike and You're Out

BY JUAN GONZALEZ

The year was 1974. The place Brooklyn, N.Y. They were childhood friends and in love. He was 19, she was 15.

When Melida Alcantara discovered her daughter was having sex with Jesús Collado, she had him arrested for statutory rape. In court, both teenagers defended the romance.

The judge promptly convicted Collado of sexually assaulting a minor, a Class-A misdemeanor under New York law. But noting that this was the teenager's first crime and that he had recently arrived from the Dominican Republic, the judge sentenced him to three years probation.

"All I wanted to do was punish them for their actions and break up their relationship," Alcantara recalled recently.

Twenty-three years later, that minor conviction has spawned a Kafkaesque nightmare for Collado and his family, and Alcantara feels horribly responsible.

Shortly after his conviction, Collado fell in love with and married a Puerto Rican co-worker at his factory, Judith Gonzalez. They have been together ever since, raising five children, two of whom are in college. For the past several years, they have managed a thriving restaurant in upper Manhattan.

By all accounts, Collado has been a model father, a hardworking businessman and has had no further problems with the law.

His ordeal began after he visited the Dominican Republic in late March. On his return to New York on April 7, he was asked by an immigration agent at Kennedy Airport if he'd ever been convicted of a crime. Unaware of the tough new immigration restrictions Congress passed last year, Collado volunteered the story of his old misdemeanor. His honesty landed him in an immigration jail in York, Pa., where he has been incarcerated for the past five months.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) moved to exclude him from the country as an undesirable alien, but an Immigration Court judge who heard the case on May 21 ordered the agency to release him. Collado, the judge reminded the INS, has been a permanent resident for 25 years. If the INS wants to deport him for his past conviction, the judge said, the agency must file a deportation action. In that case, Collado would be eligible for bail while the request is resolved.

But the INS, rejecting even a plea on behalf of Collado by Alcantara, chose instead to appeal the judge's order to the Immigration Appeals Board in Washington, D.C., and to keep Collado behind bars throughout the notoriously slow appeals process.

While Collado languished in jail, his 17-year-old daughter Julissa was critically injured in an automobile accident and his wife Judith was hospitalized for surgery on a tumor. Each time the INS refused requests by his lawyer for a humanitarian parole to visit them in the hospital.

Meanwhile, business at the family restaurant has plummeted, medical bills have soared, and Judith Collado has become exhausted and bewildered.

No one in the Collado family understands how a 23-year-old misdemeanor conviction from a teenage love affair can erase a lifetime of a man's good works.

"We've always worked, we pay our taxes, and my husband hasn't committed any crime," she said. "Why do they treat him like some murderer?"

Welcome to the era of one strike and you're out. Under the immigration and anti-terrorism laws that the right-wing zealots in Congress enacted in 1996, not just repeat felons but even law-abiding immigrants who in the distant past committed

certain misdemeanors, such as those involving "moral turpitude," can be deported or denied entry into the country.

"Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people have already been affected," said Lucas Guttentag, who heads the Immigrant Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union. Immigration lawyers tell horror stories of people with minor past convictions for shoplifting or possession of marijuana, who after turning their lives around are now being targeted for deportation.

The new INS policies have sparked a raging legal battle, which will eventually wind up in the Supreme Court.

So far, not many federal judges have addressed the assault on constitutional rights that the new law represents. One courageous exception has been Jack Weinstein, the senior federal judge for the Eastern District of New York, who blasted Attorney General Janet Reno's use of deportation for retroactive punishment as "an arbitrary use of power." "Congress should not be seen as having acted against our deeply rooted understanding of justice and human rights unless it has clearly indicated its intent to do so," Weinstein wrote in June in a 100-page decision in the case of *Mojica v. Reno*.

In the continuing demagoguery over fighting crime, the Clinton administration seems more determined than the Gingrich Republicans to use immigrants as scapegoats. Today, even the forgotten mistakes of teenage lovers have become fair game. ■

Juan Gonzalez is a writer for the New York Daily News. His "Forgotten America" column will appear monthly in ITT.

**Immigrants
who committed
a crime long ago
have become
INS targets.**

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

The '67 Riots

*30 Years
After the "Long Hot Summer,"
America Hasn't Come to Terms
with Its Race Problem.*

The anniversary of the "long hot summer" riots of 1967 coincided nicely with the "racial conversation" President Clinton called for earlier this summer. During a speech in San Diego in June 14, Clinton initiated what he said would be a yearlong dialogue on race relations. "We have torn down the barriers in our laws," he said. "Now we must break down the barriers in our lives, our minds and our hearts." The day before this speech, he announced that a presidential advisory board on race would conduct a series of town-hall meetings and, after a year, produce a White House report on race.

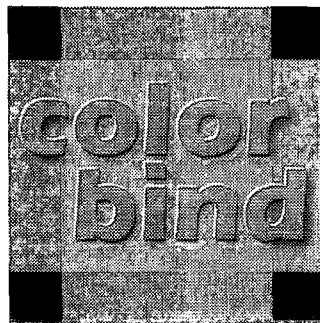
A commemoration of the events of 30 years ago could have provided a much-needed historical context to these contemporary discussions. But it's a safe bet that more people noted the anniversary of the so-called "alien" spaceship crash near Roswell, N.M., in 1947 than the anniversary of the most violent American year since the Civil War. In 1967, the black inner cities of Newark, N.J., and Detroit exploded in two of the largest of the urban riots of the tumultuous '60s. At least 70 people were killed, nearly 4,000 injured and thousands arrested. Property damage left thousands homeless, and three decades later, the two cities remain deeply scarred.

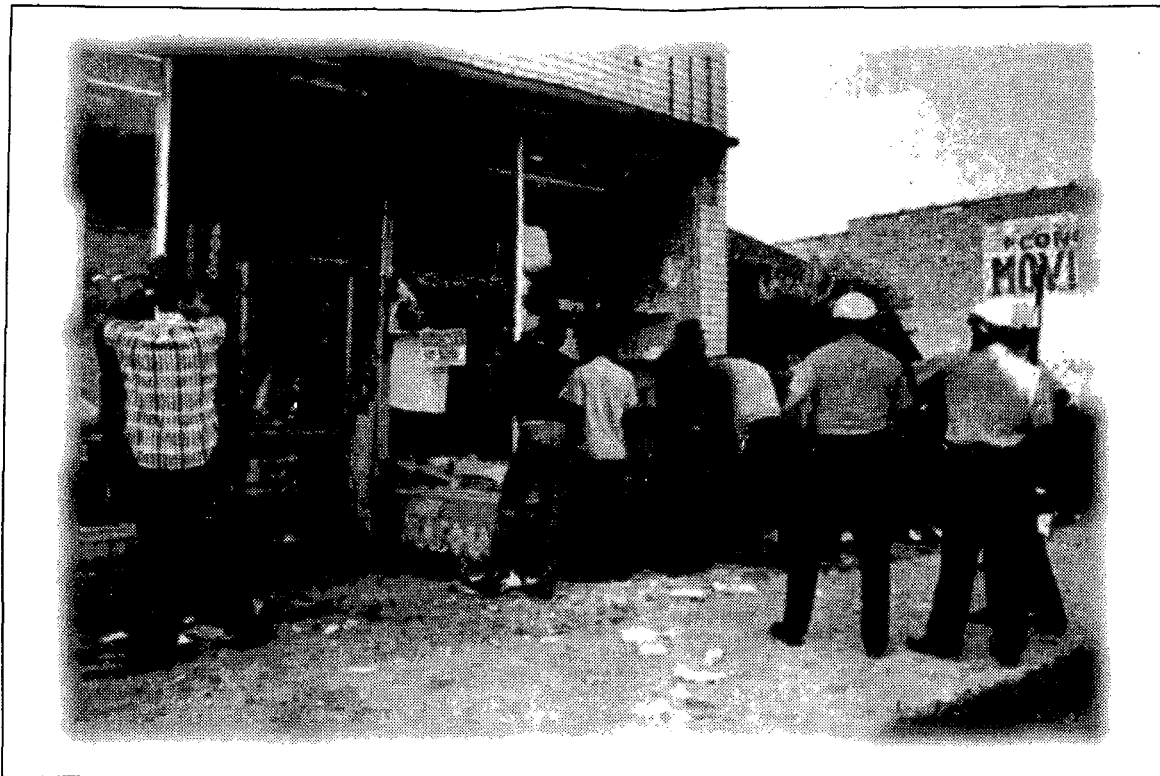
This was a volatile period in black America. The civil rights movement, with its vivid images of black people being savagely assaulted by segregationists, was regularly showcased in the mainstream media. Increasing numbers of African-Americans were infuriated by those pictures and the seemingly intransigent racism they demonstrated. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael chanted

"Black Power" during a civil rights march in Greenwood, Miss. Within no time at all, that phrase was dropping from the lips of black youth everywhere. Its popularity indicated a widespread disenchantment with the non-violent, direct-action tactics of the civil rights movement. For many black Americans, those protest strategies simply showed off the black church leadership while allowing white racists to assault blacks with impunity.

More than 100 cities erupted into violence during the summer of '67, swelling the count of dead, injured and arrested, and adding a frightening credence to the rhetoric of revolution that characterized those turbulent times. The year began with many racial tensions left over from disturbances in the previous three years, the largest of which were Harlem, N.Y., in 1964 and Watts, Calif., in 1965. In early June, small eruptions of violence flared up in Tampa, Fla., Cincinnati and Atlanta. At the time of the rebellions, both Newark and Detroit had predominantly black populations and white political leadership. Detroit's police had a national reputation for paramilitary tactics; the force's antipathy to African-Americans was famous in black communities across the nation.

Newark, during the '60s, was a hotbed of radical black politics. Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple movement got its start there, as did Bishop Ford's Black Zionist Movement. Black nationalist writer and theorist Imamu Amiri Baraka (a.k.a. LeRoi Jones) was based in Newark during this period. But despite this tradition of black activism, this majority-black city was ruled ruthlessly by one of the last Italian-American big-city political machines. Because of Mayor Hugh Addonizio's





barely-disguised disdain for his black constituents and his brazen acts of political favoritism, tensions between the black community and the government were running high.

On July 12, 1967, Newark police arrested a 40-year-old black cab driver named John Smith. According to bystanders, the officers assaulted him while dragging him to a police station near a public housing project. That tale of police brutality spread, igniting a conflagration that took six days to extinguish. By the time the shooting stopped, at least 26 people had been killed (24 black civilians, one white police officer and a white fireman) and 1,700 injured. Newark's black residents complained bitterly that the police provoked and perpetuated much of the violence. Reports of indiscriminate beatings and harassment were rife.

Richard Baldwin, a student at Newark's Essex County Junior College in 1967, recalled the brutal treatment he received from both the police and the National Guard. "They were acting like they had some kind of special orders to just knock us around," says Baldwin. "I mean, those uniformed white boys were just going around slapping brothers, kicking folks, spitting on people ... just trying to provoke somebody to do something that would justify a bullet. And I'm sure that many more died than the 24 they listed in the records."

The number of deaths may indeed have been undercounted, and there were certainly numerous cases of unreported police misconduct, as I discovered in 1972, when I wrote a news story about the fifth anniversary of the riot. Reports by New Jersey investigators found that some police and National Guard forces deliberately shot into stores that posted "soul brother" signs to ward off looters. The

Guard's chief of staff later testified in a New Jersey state report that his forces may have erred in shooting indiscriminately at alleged snipers. And Newark's police director noted that reports of sniping may have been exaggerated, and that the Guard and the police may have been exchanging gunfire with each other.

About 500 miles to the west, Detroit cops were involved in a campaign of raiding illegal after-hours drinking spots in black neighborhoods. Residents were convinced that the raids were examples of selective enforcement of liquor laws and racially-motivated harassment of the city's African-American community.

On July 22, police conducted a big raid on a very popular after-hours bar. A growing crowd of onlookers observed their brutal treatment of patrons. When some began throwing rocks and bottles at the police, the cops charged the crowd, swinging nightsticks and making arrests. Small-scale looting and arson began nearby and rapidly spread. Six days later, 44 were dead (34 black and 10 white) and 2,200 injured.

Avis Taylor watched some of the action from a third floor window of her Detroit family home before it was engulfed in flames. "I couldn't believe how ready so many black folks were to destroy their own neighborhoods," says the 52-year-old Taylor. "I was

shouting at people to stop throwing fire bombs at buildings on our block. But I might as well have been singing 'Moon River' or something, the way they ignored me."

Taylor, who observed countless incidents of police brutality, charges that some police and National Guard members actually started some fires. "They were acting like it was open

*On July 22,
Detroit police
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Six days later,
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dead.*

season on black folks and they were doing everything they could to hurt us."

The panel that investigated the riots, the Kerner Commission, famously warned in its 1968 report that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Unless America comprehensively addressed the ills of black America, the report concluded, racial exclusion would "make permanent the division of our country into two societies: one, largely Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other, predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs."

The commission's report urged the government to invest heavily in job training, education and housing to help avert the dangers it forecast. Significantly, the report devoted an entire chapter to a caustic criticism of the news media for its scant minority participation. "The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world," the commission observed. The American press was one "that repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America." The media's failure "to portray the Negro as a matter of routine and in the context of total society" had contributed to this country's deep racial divisions.

With the cities still smoldering in 1972, those divisions posed a clear and present danger to America's well-being and deeply tarnished its international reputation. The rhetoric of racial rebellion was still thick, and the social instability wrought by this urban unrest was bad for business. The logic of the marketplace demanded that something be done to defuse the threat of social disintegration. In order to address the issue effectively, the mainstream media needed to know what was going on in America's volatile inner cities. Stung by the Kerner Commission's harsh appraisal, many leading media executives (who fancied themselves relatively cosmopolitan and politically progressive) were spurred into action.

In that brief historical moment, mainstream media became desperate for African-American input. While still a senior in college, I was hired in 1972 to work full-time with the Associated Press bureau in Newark. Of course, this made sense for me: A job with the king of the wire services was an excellent initiation into the world of journalism. It also made sense to the AP, which had no black reporters in its New Jersey bureau even though it was headquartered in a riot-torn city with a black population of 65 percent.

But even as the Kerner Commission's predictions have come true, its other recommendations have been buried beneath piles of position papers from right-wing think tanks. For the last decade, conservatives have set the tone for our public discourse on race, adeptly—if perversely

—appropriating the "color-blind" rhetoric of the civil rights movement for their own cause. The California Civil Rights Initiative referendum, Proposition 209, which abolished all racial preferences in state public policy, was passed in 1996 and took effect in August. Its sponsors have since taken the show on the road: On June 17, Rep. Charles Canady (R-Fla.) introduced national legislation, misnamed the Civil Rights Act of 1997, which is similar to the California referendum. A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate by Sens. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah).

Most of the Kerner Commission's recommendations (which focused on compensatory programs designed to help African-American citizens gain access to the American mainstream) have faded into oblivion. Even President Lyndon Johnson, who today is denounced by conservatives and liberals alike for his "Great Society" programs, rejected the commission's report as too radical. In these days of right-wing hegemony, it's useful to recall that even during the country's most liberal periods, U.S. leaders still resisted taking the dramatic action necessary to reach racial reckoning.

Racial tensions may not be as explosive today as they were during that long hot summer 30 years ago, but they remain volatile. Several cities (including Lexington, Ky., Indianapolis, St. Petersburg, Fla., and New York) have suffered small eruptions of racial unrest in the last few years. But instead of using the anniversary of the riots to highlight the Kerner Commission's findings and perhaps recall its insights on race relations, the Clinton administration has convened a new commission that is determined, it seems, to reinvent the wheel. ■

**One nation under anger,
with fear and loathing for all**

THE TRIUMPH OF MEANNESS

America's War Against Its Better Self

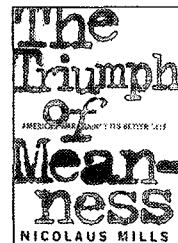
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Writing BEHIND BARS

A Wisconsin Inmate Fights to Be Heard

Adrian Lomax, a Wisconsin prison inmate serving a life sentence, wrote an article for the November 18, 1992 *Madison Edge* that detailed alleged abuse of inmates by a correctional officer. The guard in question denied the charges, and Department of Corrections officials, who failed to interview the inmates making the claims, charged Lomax with "disrespect" and "lying about staff." On the same day the issue hit the streets, prison officials retaliated against Lomax by throwing him in solitary confinement.

His tiled cell—"the size of a large bathroom"—contained a bed, a toilet and a sink. Lomax was allowed neither TV nor radio. For a time, prison officials denied him access to books, magazines and newspapers. His meals were served through a slot in the cell door. Every time he left his cell—to see a doctor, receive visitors or exercise alone in the kennel-like enclosure reserved for those "in the hole"—he was handcuffed and shackled in leg irons. Lomax spent 360 days alone in his cell.

When he emerged from the "segregation" unit and again had access to a typewriter and law books, Lomax sued the Department of Corrections. He is still in court, arguing that his punishment violated his right to freedom of speech. At issue are not only the First Amendment rights of the 1.6 million men and women currently incarcerated in the United States, but also the right of the public to know how the prison-industrial complex spends tens of billions of its tax dollars every year.

Wisconsin is not the only state where prison officials try to control what the public hears about their penal systems. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) is conducting a survey of press regulations at prison systems in all 50 states that will be released later this year. SPJ's Kyle Neiderpruem says that since California pioneered press restrictions in 1995, with a ban on face-to-face interviews with prisoners, about 15 other states have followed suit.

In an interview with the *Virginia Pilot*, Director of Corrections Ronald Angelone explained Virginia's ban this way: "We're just controlling the environment because I don't want the news media to be manipulated."

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections also recently

proposed a new press policy. The state wants reporters to vet their stories with prison officials, who will determine whether the subject matter "represents a legitimate news interest," and whether the resulting report would have a "law enforcement benefit."

In September, the California legislature passed a bill restoring the right of reporters to hold face-to-face interviews with prisoners. But law-and-order Governor Pete Wilson, who in his last election received more than \$1 million from the Correctional Peace Officers Association, is likely to veto the legislation. (On average, a California prison guard earns \$10,000 more than a California teacher.)

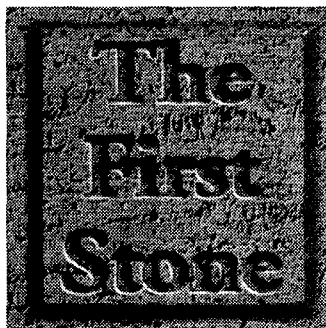
Ironically, as the legislature was passing the bill in Sacramento, prison officials at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego were throwing a prisoner into the hole for talking to the press. According to prison records, inmate Shearwood Fleming "was deemed a threat to the safety and security of the institution" and placed in solitary

confinement "pending investigation of a conspiracy to mastermind a sabotage effort to discredit a joint venture project at this institution" by "contacting the news media, thereby disrupting the orderly operation of the institution."

Fleming's crime? He told a journalist from a San Diego television station that Donovan prisoners on work duty were required to remove "Made from Honduras" labels from T-shirts and replace them with ones reading "Made in USA."

Prison walls—and press bans—not only keep inmates in, they keep public accountability out. Since Lomax was put in solitary confinement for writing the offending article in 1992, prison officials have refused repeated requests by reporters to interview him in person. "No one aside from prisoners and prison employees really has access to see what is going on inside prisons," says Lomax, in a phone interview. "So if the public is going to have any source of information other than the official government line, they are going to have to hear what the prisoners have to say."

Legal precedent on the right of prisoners to communicate their views through the media will be set by Lomax's case, which is being appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Back in 1980, the Supreme Court was the last thing on Lomax's mind.



He was a long-haired, 19-year-old high school drop-out from a poor family who lived in the rural Wisconsin town of Gays Mills. On February 13, he killed a man. "I got in a fight with two guys outside of a tavern," he says. "I used a knife, stabbed both of them and one of them died." Convicted of first-degree murder, he was sentenced to life.

Evidence at his trial showed that the fight began when the two men attacked him. Lomax believes he should have been convicted of second-degree murder. "I didn't have any particular political awareness of the factors operating in society that determined the reality for working-class people," he says. "But by reading and seeing how the justice system operates in other cases, it was pretty clear to me that if I had had the resources to hire a good lawyer and make use of the rights granted to defendants, I would not have been convicted of first-degree murder and suffered the burden of a life sentence."

As he reflected on his own case, he noticed other injustices in the criminal justice system. "I began to wonder," he says, "how it came about that our system of laws had developed so that the full weight of the criminal justice system would come down like a boulder on top of poor people." And realizing that the "public on the outside" had little idea of the conditions he and other inmates faced, Lomax decided to become a freelance journalist. In February 1992, he started writing a column for *The Edge*, an alternative newspaper in Madison.

The first column to get him in trouble was a story detailing the abusive behavior of guard supervisor Patricia Garro. "She would routinely criticize and insult prisoners, commenting derisively on their appearance and perceived level of intelligence," he wrote. "As a lieutenant, Garro had the authority to order inmates transferred to segregation on the spot, and pris-

oners who responded in any manner to her verbal assaults soon found themselves being carted off to the seg unit." According to Lomax, Garro had sent prisoners to "the hole" for saying that eating pork was against their religious beliefs, for complaining about the quality of the prison food, for joking about the effectiveness of a fire drill and for wearing a hat while standing outside in a cafeteria chow line.

That article got Lomax 360 days in solitary confinement at the Racine Correctional Institution. Subsequent columns critical of other prison officials earned him an additional two years in the hole. That punishment was later rescinded after a public outcry and the intervention of Rep. Tammy Baldwin, the Madison Democrat who chaired the state legislature's corrections committee.

Once out of solitary, Lomax sued, arguing that his punishment violated his rights to freedom of speech and press under the First Amendment. A state appellate court ruled against Lomax, and the state's Supreme Court last year upheld that judgment, citing as precedent the California case of *Martin v. Rison*.

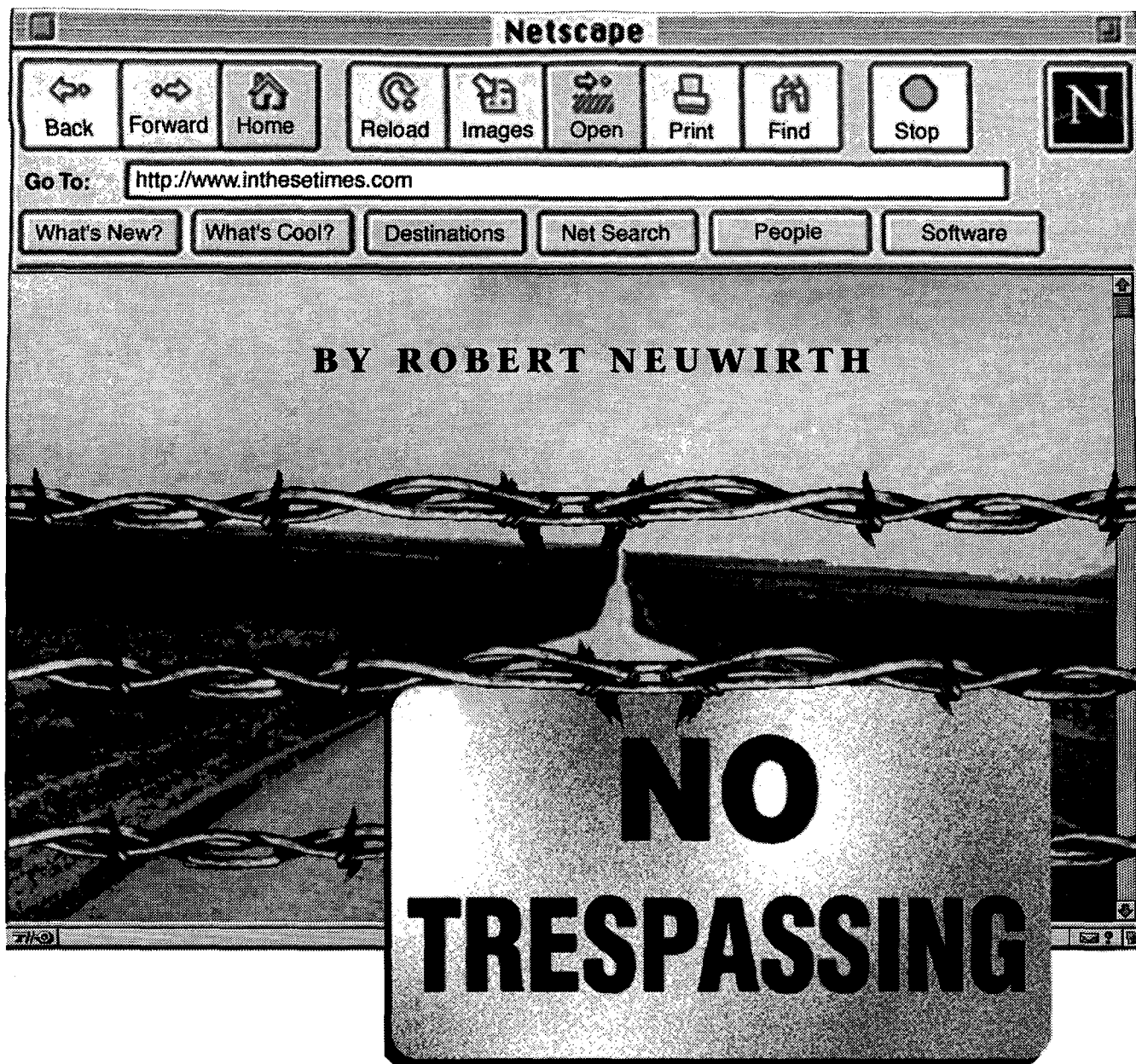
Danny Martin was at the center of a high-profile press freedom case that began nearly a decade ago. Martin, who wrote a regular column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* about life in a federal penitentiary, was put in solitary confinement for two days in 1988 after publishing the "Gulag Mentality," an article that dealt with how petty regulations exacerbated tensions in the prisons. Martin sued. In its defense, the Bush administration Justice Department argued that newspapers and newsmagazines were incoming mail, which courts have held can be strictly regulated, and therefore the prison was allowed by law to restrict Martin's publishing. A federal judge accepted the Justice Department argument, and Martin appealed. But before *Martin v. Rison* could be resolved, Martin was released on parole, and the appellate court threw out his suit, declaring the matter, and the lower court ruling, "vacated and moot."

Peter Sussman, co-author with Martin of *Committing Journalism*, a book about Martin's case, expressed disbelief that *Martin v. Rison* had been resurrected as legal precedent. "The [federal appellate] judges threw out the lower court ruling as well as the history of the case in order that it wouldn't have any precedent value," he said. "It was not to be published. It was dead."

Meanwhile, Lomax is waiting to see whether the U.S. Supreme Court will decide to consider his appeal. He continues writing, and he is a regular commentator on Madison community radio station WORT. But he is not challenging prison authorities in the same way he used to. He hopes someday to be released on parole, for which he has been eligible for six years. Spending four of the last 17 years in solitary confinement for a variety of political actions has taken its toll. "I haven't really made any overt attempts to organize prisoners for political actions for two years," says Lomax. "I guess you could say I am trying to stay out of the seg unit." ■



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A hundred miles off the coast of Scotland, on an archipelago known chiefly for its ponies and sheepdogs, two local newspapers run by former colleagues had a spat in cyberspace. It was the opening salvo in an accelerating dispute over property rights on the Internet.

The fight started with a seemingly benign event: On October 14, 1996, the *Shetland News*, an upstart Internet newspaper, set up several links to articles from its older and more staid rival, the *Shetland Times*. But the *Times* was not amused, particularly because the links never directly indicated that the stories in question came from a different newspaper. They simply listed the *Times* headlines as if they were part of the *News*. By clicking on the headlines, readers were moved to the *Times* stories, contained in a frame within the *News* Web site.

"Although our reports retained our logo, they were directly

incorporated into a competitor's news service," Robert Wishart, publisher of the *Times*, said in an e-mail interview. "We felt that people would be misled into thinking that we are a part of, or affiliated with, the *Shetland News*."

Wishart sued, claiming that the *News* was pilfering its copyrighted stories. For its part, the *News* argued that it had the right to make links to any location on the Internet. "A link is not a rip-off but a free gift," Jonathan Wills, publisher of the *News*, asserted in one of his newspaper columns. A judge, however, issued an injunction blocking the links until the case is resolved in a trial set to begin in November.

In the year since the Shetlands squabble erupted, links—those tiny, clickable items embedded in most Web pages that enable users to hop from one domain to another—have come under increasing attack.

Links are the mass transit system of the Internet. They make

it possible to move swiftly around the virtual globe. With links, an independent labor activist with a home page, for example, can hook up to the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration Web site, allowing people to study the government's position on ergonomics legislation. Or a right-wing pressure group can route its members to an environmental Web site, encouraging them to send nasty e-mail.

Lawsuits challenging links raise the question of whether the simple act of pointing toward someone else's online address—which, after all, is what a link really does—is stealing their private property. Ultimately, these lawsuits may encourage Web site owners to block access to parts of the virtual world. And that threatens the core of Internet culture—for how can a medium that thrives on connectivity survive when it starts restricting people's ability to move around and communicate?

This is not, however, a cut-and-dried issue. The links controversy involves copyright and trademark law, the protection of intellectual property, the constitutional guarantee of free speech, and the time-honored principle of fair use. Balancing these values is no easy matter.

For instance, if a community organization that publishes an online newsletter sets up a link to an article from the *New York Times*, is the group unfairly using the *Times*' copyrighted material or is that Net link a fair use of the text? What if a consumer health group offers a link to Procter & Gamble's Web site in its fight against the fat substitute Olestra that the company markets? Is the group just exercising its free speech rights or should Procter & Gamble be able to veto that link or even sue the group?

"Anyone who puts up a Web site is inviting people to link to it," says Shari Steele, staff attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a group that is one of the most outspoken defenders of free speech rights and the Internet's freewheeling culture.

Other analysts beg to differ. "I think that there are benefits to having a technical and legal environment that would permit someone to operate a closed Web site," says lawyer Barry D. Weiss, a partner with the Gordon & Glickson law firm in Chicago, who has written on the import of the linking cases for the *National Law Journal*. Comparing operating a Web site to running a store in a mall, Weiss argues that companies have the right "to control how you experience their material" the same way a department store has the right to insist that customers enter through the front door and pass through a whole lot of impulse purchase merchandise before they get to the items they want.

The first links case to hit the U.S. court system involved copyright and intellectual property issues akin to those raised in the Shetlands dispute. In February, six media giants, led by the *Washington Post*, put the screws to a small Phoenix-based Web service called TotalNews. The battle involved framing—the practice of linking to other people's Web pages while keeping your own advertising and logo as the frame on the users' screen.

TotalNews ran a service that linked to hundreds of news outlets around the world, but kept their text within a frame that presented its own advertising. "This was the electronic equivalent of taking *Time* magazine, separating the pages and reselling them with new advertising in the margin," says Bruce Keller of the New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton, which represented the *Post*. "It was piracy pure and simple." By using its own frame to display articles from other sources, Keller says, TotalNews was profiting from the intellectual property of his clients.


That case never went to trial. It was settled less than four months after it was

filed when TotalNews agreed to stop framing the six plaintiffs' online services (in addition to the *Post*, the news sources were Times Mirror, Time Warner, CNN, Dow Jones and Reuters). TotalNews also agreed to sign a free "linking license" with the six news companies, essentially getting their approval to link to their sites.


Keller asserts that his case does not set a precedent that will eliminate links. The Web, he argues, operates with "an implied agreement" to linking, meaning that people who establish sites in cyberspace accept the principle that other people will link to them. He argues, however, that one Web site shouldn't be able to use a link to grab content from another and display it on its own pages.

A new suit pending in federal court in Los Angeles, however, could take away Net users' implicit right to establish links. The lawsuit, filed in mid-May, stems from a battle between Ticketmaster, the world's leading vendor of concert tickets, and Microsoft, the world's largest software corporation. Unlike the Shetlands and TotalNews cases, this lawsuit is not about intellectual property, but about a company's prerogative to fence off its site.

The suit involves *sidewalk.com*, Microsoft's growing group of online guides to nightlife and entertainment in big Ameri-



Is the simple act of pointing toward someone else's online address the equivalent of stealing private property?



can cities. The computer giant initially negotiated with Ticketmaster to set up a series of links from *sidewalk.com* to the ticket-selling service. When talks broke down, Ticketmaster inked a pact with *CitySearch*, a rival online urban entertainment guide. But Microsoft's Seattle outpost linked to the ticket agency anyway, bypassing Ticketmaster's home page and letting users jump right to the location where they can purchase their seats.

Though people who used the link were put in touch with Ticketmaster, and if they bought tickets, paid Ticketmaster's usual surcharge, the company was outraged. "This is a blatant case of electronic piracy," Ticketmaster CEO Fredric D. Rosen said in a prepared statement about the lawsuit. (Ticketmaster declined to comment further for this article.)

The company immediately blocked the Microsoft link (users now get a message telling them that they chose an unauthorized link and can get to Ticketmaster on their own, without going through Microsoft) and filed a federal lawsuit claiming copyright and trademark violations and the misappropriation of Ticketmaster's name and content.

In response, Microsoft's lawyers have adopted a true hacker's position, arguing that Net users have total freedom to link to whomever they want. "Any business, such as Ticketmaster,

participating in the Internet and the World Wide Web invites other participants to use the business' Internet addresses and URLs [Uniform Resource Locators] to contact it," the company stated in its court filing.

More than the other disputes, the Ticketmaster lawsuit has huge implications. Unlike the Shetland Islands or TotalNews imbroglios, Microsoft did not incorporate Ticketmaster into its frame or present Ticketmaster as anything other than a separate ticketing service. Therefore, if Ticketmaster wins, it will establish the precedent that a site owner can block an Internet link simply because it doesn't like it.

Such a ruling would radically change the lay of the land on the Net. Some owners might decide to fence off their sites. Others might be afraid to set up independent links for fear of litigation. Surfing would clearly suffer.

Some Net observers think Ticketmaster doesn't have a leg to stand on. But others aren't so sure. In fact, some companies are already seeking to prevent unauthorized links to their Web pages. The American Bar Association's Commerce in Cyberspace Committee, for instance, advises businesses that want to set up Web links to get prior approval before they actually create the links in order to avoid litigation. "The Wild West mindset of the Internet and its users is

AN INVISIBLE INTRIGUE

You can't see them or hear them but they've emerged as the culprit in the latest twist of intellectual property law online.

They're called metatags, and they're part of the Internet infrastructure. In essence, metatags are little pieces of software that exist in the substructure of all Web sites. They're invisible on your computer screen, unless you penetrate the dense HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) coding that comprises each and every home page.

Metatags function like keywords. When you plug in a word to your average Internet search engine, it doesn't search the full content of every Web site all over the globe. There's so much text out there in cyberspace that such a search would take too long. Instead, the search engines save time by cruising for metatags that match the phrase you typed in.

But when the Colorado law firm Oppedahl & Larson used the Alta Vista search engine to look for its

own name, it got a surprising result. The firm found 11 responses to three different corporate Web sites. None of those sites had anything to do with Oppedahl & Larson, and none of them referred to the law firm in writing. But, when the firm cracked their HTML code, it found that those sites had embedded the names Oppedahl and Larson in their pages as metatags, in what appeared to be an attempt to hijack people looking for the law firm to different Web sites.

So Oppedahl & Larson did what any law firm worth its salt would do. It went to court. The suit, which was filed in late August, is the first to argue that unseen items like metatags are intellectual property. The law firm asserts that the unauthorized use of its name as a hidden keyword amounts to trademark infringement and false representation.

—R.N.

no longer the rule," says Jeffrey Ritter, the Columbus, Ohio, attorney who heads the panel.

All this legal lip-flapping doesn't faze Steele of the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "I'm not worried," she says. "I think there's an over-reaction to lawsuits on the Internet. I think the medium is just going through some growing pains."

But Weiss of Gordon & Glickson disagrees. As the American West expanded, he notes, "branding and barbed wire were the technical controls that allowed the ranches to grow. But they were only effective because of laws protecting property." He foresees more lawsuits and increasing attempts to codify property rights on the Net.

Indeed, legislators are already kicking into gear. In 1996, Georgia passed the Computer Systems Protection Act, which banned all sorts of Internet activities. The bill made it a misdemeanor to use people's names, corporate logos and trademarks on Web pages and in links without getting prior consent. It even made it a crime to post a picture of the state seal on the Web without the state's approval. The law was derailed only when the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) went to court. This past June, a federal judge blocked the state from enforcing the law until the constitutional issues have been sorted out.

The ACLU is troubled by the specter of governmental regulation and the push to create a new code of conduct for the Internet. "A simple link shouldn't present any sort of trademark or copyright question," says Cassidy Sehgal of the ACLU. She says that existing intellectual property laws regarding copyright, trademarks and the misappropriation of someone else's work are sufficient to keep the Web free and fair. Any attempts to license Web links or put the Internet under governmental control, she says, "definitely threaten freedom of speech and discourse." ■

Robert Neuwirth is a freelance writer based in New York. He last wrote for In These Times about rent control in New York City ("Revolt of the Haves," June 16).

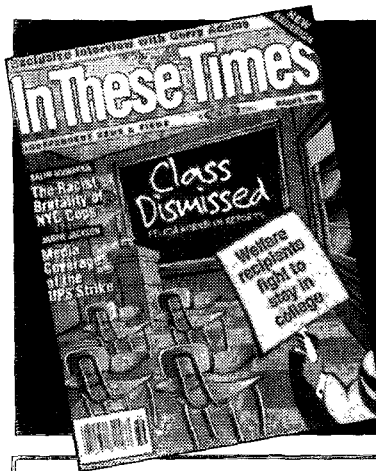
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Virtual Safety Nets

A burgeoning technology-access movement is connecting poor people to computers and the Internet.

By CHRISTOPHER D. COOK

Worlds apart but only a few miles away from the Silicon Valley's venture-capitalist billionaire boulevards lies East Palo Alto's "Whiskey Gulch," a depressed strip of liquor marts and check-cashing stores. In a city once tagged as the "murder capital of the United States," the nonprofit Plugged In provides an electronic oasis for local residents.

Some 500 people a week use Plugged In's drop-in and computer tutorial center to write resumes, learn new software or touch a computer keyboard for the first time. "People come in and write letters to their landlords," says development director Magda Escobar. "Some people come in just to use the phone. A lot of people around here don't have a telephone."

Wading into an information age that, through downsizing and automation, has left many behind, single mothers drop by to learn word-processing and spreadsheet programs. Plugged In addresses a broad spectrum of community needs: from basic computer training for local residents and after-school care for kids who have nowhere else to go, to teen-run enterprises marketing Web page designs and a nationwide online chat group.

Most of the low-income adults who visit Plugged In have no other access to computers. "It's really about bridging the technology gap between East Palo Alto and the Silicon Valley, and looking at how high technology can create opportunities for people," says founder Bart Decrem. Launched in 1992, Plugged In has become—thanks to grants from computer giants such as Intel and Sun Microsystems—a \$950,000 organization staffed by 25 teenagers and 15 adults.

Plugged In is part of a burgeoning technology-access movement involving hundreds of community-based organizations across the United States. More than 200 groups have joined the Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet), whose mission statement maps out its fundamental concern: "In an increasingly

technologically dominated society, people who are socially and/or economically disadvantaged will become further disadvantaged if they lack access to computers and computer-related technologies."

As welfare reform thrusts millions into a shaky job market, there is a growing concern that people lack the basic computer skills necessary for most entry-level jobs. Plugged In and its counterparts offer promising palliatives, connecting people in poor areas to computers and the Internet. But most nonprofit and governmental technology-access programs focus primarily on training, delaying thorny questions about what sorts of jobs people coming out of these programs can actually find.

Decrem fears that people who learn basic computer skills at organizations like Plugged In will be channeled into low-wage jobs as data clerks. "I'm really concerned that people in our community will become the blue-collar workers of the information age," he says. "I'm really not comfortable saying we're going to become a big data-processing firm. It perpetuates the disparities."

Instead of job placement, Decrem emphasizes individual enterprise. "We can help people become entrepreneurs," he says. "We say if you want to start your own business, here's the technology to get you started. ... We don't think of you as poor, you have something to contribute." Decrem stresses the need for people to "set their own agenda for learning. We've seen a lot of people come in that want to take charge of their lives."

But for many at Plugged In—some of whom have been recently released from prison or are recovering from drug or alcohol addiction—"taking charge" has more to do with getting started than with starting a business.

Bishop Wethington, 59, made his first foray into computers at Plugged In while recovering from substance abuse at the rehabilitation program Free At Last. "I came here to do a bid proposal," says Wethington, who recently passed California's contractor licensing exam. "I wanted to get the staff here to do the bid proposal for

me, but they came over, set me up at a computer, and said, 'you can do it yourself.' " Wethington now uses Plugged In's facilities to contact clients and design proposals. "This place is like an office for me," he says.

Technology-access initiatives like Plugged In require substantial investments in computer hardware and software. The Clinton administration has provided some short-term seed money to get these projects off the ground. In 1994, Clinton unveiled the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP), which provided \$18.5 million this year in merit-based matching grants to computer-access projects in schools, libraries, hospitals and other non-profit organizations. The TIIAP, part of the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, sponsors "electronic community networks" that its Web page claims "help bridge information gaps for children in farming communities and urban inner cities ... [and] provide worker training and new job opportunities in economically depressed areas." In a similar vein, the 1996 Telecommunications Act reduces telephone and Internet rates for low-income and rural consumers, schools, libraries and hospitals.

But the money is a drop in the bucket. America's schools will need more than a few million dollars to get up to speed. In a February 1996 speech to elementary and secondary school principals, outgoing Federal Communications Commission Chairman Reed Hundt described severe technology gaps in the U.S. education system. "Even as the business sec-

tor in this country is roaring into the 21st century information age, 45 million children go to school in a 19th century world of chalk-and-blackboard technology," he said. "Only 12 percent of our classrooms have phone lines. Only 3 percent have computer networks."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has gotten into the act as well, launching a grandiose, yet ultimately small-scale plan to bring high technology to low-income housing. HUD's Campus of Learners (COL) program will equip 25 public housing projects with computer-training centers and fiber-optic cables to enable residents to use the Internet. Nine of the programs are up and running, including sites in San Diego, Hartford, Conn., St. Louis and South Bend, Ind.

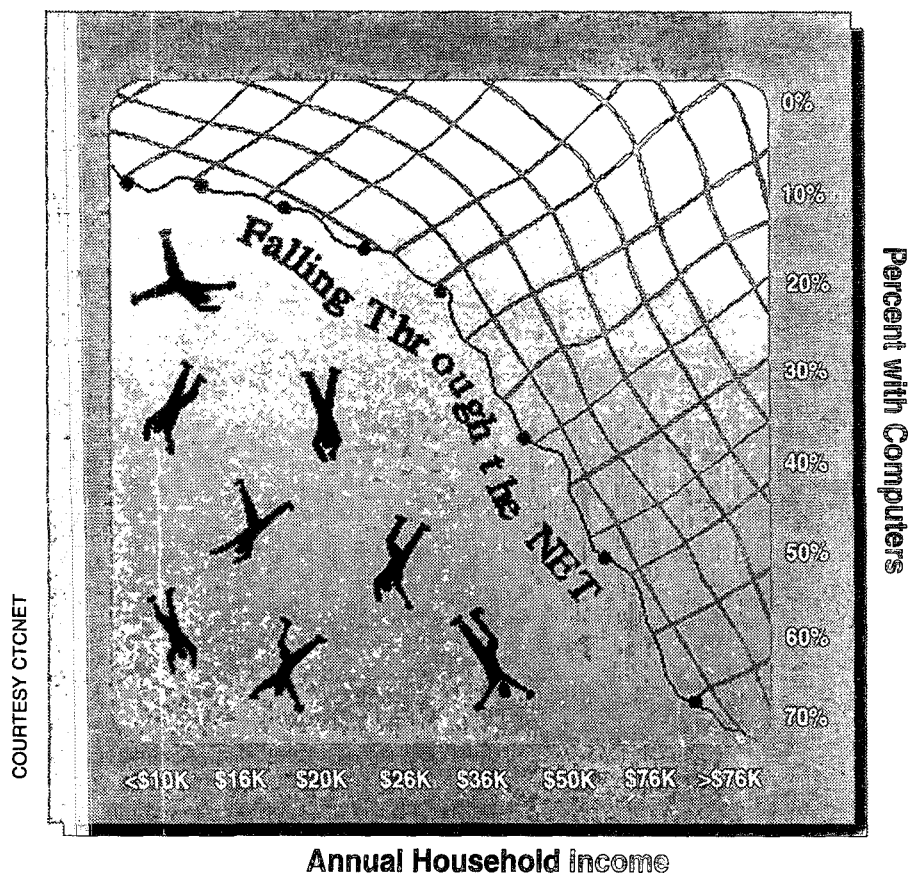
Participants attend community college classes, computer-skills workshops and, when necessary, GED courses. "The end goal is to have people acquire the kinds of jobs skills to eventually move out of public housing, find a job and get themselves off welfare," says HUD spokesman Victor Lambert.

However, jobs that pay a living wage will probably remain elusive. The training stresses basic computer skills that would put COL graduates near the bottom of the high-tech pay scale. "There's a heavy emphasis on data processing, mostly base-level data entry," says Lambert. (Data-entry jobs typically pay \$6 to \$8 an hour.)

Interested residents enter a competitive application process in which their record as "responsible" public housing tenants who have paid their bills and kept up their units is evaluated. The "campuses" are for members only; HUD requires that residents who don't participate in the computer education and training programs relocate from a COL site to another public housing facility. Residents who find work and stop training have one year to leave the COL housing.

Former Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros modeled the HUD project after a recent Denver Housing Authority (DHA) initiative, which involved redeveloping its 207-unit North Lincoln Homes into three- and four-bedroom townhouses on tree-lined streets. A Family Learning Center at North Lincoln's hub will house 18 computers and host training sessions for residents. "It's something we're all proud of, a prototype for the nation," boasts DHA executive director Salvador Carpio. "All the concepts that went into the COL were created before welfare reform."

The COL strategy also entails wiring public housing with fiber-optic cables so that residents with computers can access the Internet. But, according to Denver COL coordinator Lynn Bacard, just 10 percent of North Lincoln residents have a computer—making this expenditure questionable at best.



Like Plugged In, the Denver COL focuses more on computer access and training than on job placement. Carpio says the goal is "to achieve self-sufficiency in residents," and move them "up and out of public housing." Just 60 percent of North Lincoln residents are currently employed. Even so, DHA staffer Stella Madrid says, "We're not doing any specific steering to any labor market area."

COL residents are under pressure to get off public assistance due to both the new time limits imposed by welfare reform and HUD's own restrictions on program participants. Their "term-limited housing" lease—and their residency at North Lincoln—expires after four years (with a possible one-year extension). It's far from certain whether the 131 participating families will find jobs that pay enough to survive when the time comes to pack their bags and move out.

Cyper-organizers on the front lines warn that there is no simple fix for the technology gap faced by poor people. Like all community organizing, guiding people into the high-tech age requires individual contact and long-term commitment. "There's a step that everybody's missing if you really look at people in public housing, and you're looking to boost them up," says Coralee Whitcomb, founder and director of Virtually Wired, a computer-training and access program in Boston. "You have to give them a reason to do it. Simply putting computers around them doesn't give them a reason to learn it. There's this assumption that everybody's just championing at the bit to get on the Internet, and that's just not true."

Virtually Wired, located in a decaying downtown neighborhood, runs on volunteer labor and donated computers. The organization charges \$5 a day or \$20 a month for drop-in and tutorial use and distributes free passes to homeless people from the nearby shelters.

"You don't get people pouring in like you'd expect," says Whitcomb, a volunteer herself. The program's experience points out a critical breach in the movement to make high technology more accessible to poor people: Without old-fashioned door-to-door organizing, Windows 95 and the World Wide Web are just abstract icons from a distant, seemingly irrelevant world. "You have to address their life," says Whitcomb. "The people left behind would just as soon stay left behind. In my belief, it's the community networking that's going to do it."

Whitcomb recalls a HUD computer jobs fair that drew a discouragingly sparse crowd of public housing residents. Following the event, a HUD staffer told her, "It just goes to show you they're not interested. They're just lazy." Whitcomb arrived at a different conclusion. The event failed, she says, because "they didn't go around and tell everybody about the jobs fair, didn't tell them why this matters for their life. It was a 'milk and cookies down the hall' sort of thing."

Though they're hardly panaceas, programs like Virtually Wired and Plugged In are shifting the demographics in cyberspace, which so far has been largely the province of the suburban—and mostly white—middle class. At Plugged In, East Palo Alto teens join their privileged counterparts from "across the tracks" in Palo Alto to design, write and post "Rave & Rant" dialogues on everything from affirmative action and ebionics to body piercing and proms. The teens reach an estimated 50,000 weekly visitors to Plug In, the nation's most popular online teen chat group (www.teenplugin.com).

"We're not just sitting on the sidelines watching the adults doing the hard work," says 15-year-old Plug In writer Ron Chapman. "We're doing the hard work, and they're helping us out." Chapman, who hopes to become a psychologist or counselor, aims to reach "anybody and everybody" with probing discussions about teen parenting, religion and the lives of gay, lesbian and bisexual teens.

"Everything they do here prepares them for jobs," says Matt King, Plug In's chat director. Creative director Sheva Gross says the project also enables teens to "use technology in order to communicate. It teaches them to be journalists and media-savvy people in any field."

As a recent visit to Plugged In proved, these young cyber-scribes are also honing their political voice. Unique Kinsey, a quiet but confident 13-year-old who hopes to become an orthopedic surgeon, was busy composing questions and answers for that day's online dialogue. The "chat" of the day, she says, is about "how people in corporate America make more money than factory workers." ■

Christopher D. Cook is a San Francisco-based freelance reporter who has written for The Christian Science Monitor and The Nation. He last wrote for ITT about free trade and agro-exports from Central America ("Exporting misery," May 26).

ARGUING WITH THE RIGHT

The Center for Democratic Values, the think-tank project of Democratic Socialists of America, is holding its first national conference November 6-7 in Columbus Ohio. It will feature a public Left-Right debate, sponsored by Capital University, with **Cornell West** and **Barbara Ehrenreich** vs. **David Frum** (*Dead Right*) and **Stuart Butler** (Heritage Foundation).

The conference will include historical and analytical sessions, plus skills workshops for contesting the Right's current dominance of American political discussion.

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web.politics

Web'zines with a political edge

BY TOM DOWE

Politics on the Web is a frustrating mix of impassioned individuals with as many opinions as orifices and large organizations with big technology budgets. Libertarianism is far and away the prevailing ideology online, and mis- and disinformation abound. Still, alternative political viewpoints are available in far greater number and variety on the Web than via traditional media, and there are more than enough political Web 'zines to make it worth the virtual trip.

'Zines of any kind are a peculiar breed. An individualistic, do-it-yourself aesthetic seems to trump a well-reasoned, shared vision every time. In fact, the word "'zine" is a clipped form of "fanzine" not "magazine," so don't be surprised if many political Web 'zines read less like Tom Paine than like *Tiger Beat*.

The general tone of discourse on the Web can often seem dauntingly informal, in-your-face or even snotty. Some of this is by design, and represents a legitimate stylistic experiment in dumping traditional notions of moderate, "unbiased" journalism; remember, however, some of the writing that sounds like annoying teenage whining may, in fact, have been written by annoying teenage whiners.

The following collection of sites reflects the diversity of political content and distinctiveness of voice available on the Web.

Disgruntled

www.disgruntled.com/dishome.html

Billed as "the business magazine for people who work for a living," *Disgruntled* offers news, legal advice and personal anecdotes about life at work. At first glance, *Disgruntled* appears too precious, with its omnipresent mascot "Gruntz" winking on every page, but this site is not the worst way to expose folks to labor politics. Unlike, say, *Czarnecki's Labor Education Newsletter* (www.erols.com/czarlab/), *Disgruntled* gets a lot of hits and a lot of free word-of-mouth adver-

tising. Plus, there are plenty of stories on recent court cases, workers' rights and resources, and advice on organizing and fair treatment. Recent pieces include an article on the 1995 Glass Ceiling Commission report and an interview with AFL-CIO Organizing Director Richard Bensinger. Of course, what readers seem to like most is the fact that they have an opportunity to mouth off and tell their own stories.

The Consortium

www.delve.com/consort.html

The Consortium is edited by Robert Parry, a former reporter for *Newsweek* and The Associated Press and the author of *Trick or Treason* on the "October Surprise" scandal. Parry runs one of the best and most scrupulous political newsletters on the Net, with a strong commitment to "recovering lost history" as opposed to posturing or punditry. Parry began *The Consortium* "to use traditional journalistic standards and solid documentary evidence to produce investigative stories on important issues that the mainstream press has downplayed or ignored." Parry's recent series have addressed Colin Powell's military record, the Contra-crack connection and the Unification Church.

Unlike most sites, there's a price, but the archives at *The Consortium* are more than worth the \$10 a year. Articles found at *The Consortium* are also available in a newsletter version and in the recently launched *I.F. Magazine*.

The Smoking Gun

www.thesmokinggun.com

The Smoking Gun is a great idea for a Web site. Twice a week, editors William Bastone and Daniel Green upload facsimiles of primary documents they've obtained "from government and law enforcement sources, via Freedom of Information requests, and from court files nationwide." It's



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not exactly *Covert Action Quarterly*-type stuff—don't expect CIA torture manuals here. The editors are more likely to feature restraining orders of the rich and famous or the JonBenet Ramsey ransom note. Nevertheless, *The Smoking Gun* has the potential to grow into a tremendously valuable resource. Its power lies in making visible the invisible by exposing the banal, bureaucratic, warmed-over cabbage that makes things run. An example of this 'zine at its best came last April, when *The Smoking Gun* published a 1963 FBI summary of the agency's file on Jackie Robinson.

Disgruntled Housewives

www.urbekah.com/housewife/index.html

This is a true 'zine. It's also living proof that, via the Web, individuals can establish communities where none existed before. Nikol Lohr's site not only documents her life and times, it shows how one intelligent, thoughtful, idiosyncratic person can present herself in such a way that she seems truly representative of a whole demographic. She's clearly a feminist, yet in one of her latest rants worries that "they're going to throw me out of the club. ... I think most men are assholes, which I guess gives me points, but I also think most *people* are assholes." Her site's most popular feature is undoubtedly the "Dick List," an ever-deepening well of testimonials featuring dozens and dozens of anecdotes about men who are jerks. Anyone who finds Lohr a little too post-feminist can click over to the Center for the American Woman and Politics (www-rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp/) for an extensive list of more mainstream resources.

Bad Subjects

english-www.hss.cmu.edu/bs/

This collaborative Web 'zine—which is the counterpart of a print monthly available on the campus of the University of California-Berkeley—aims "to revitalize a progressive poli-

tics in retreat ... by encouraging our readers to think hard about the political dimension to all aspects of everyday life." Online since 1994, each issue is thematically organized around a particular topic. The April 1997 "Work" issue, for example, featured "Visa, Not Welfare" by Doug Henwood of *Left Business Observer* and "The Personal is Capital: Autobiographical Work and Self-Promotion" by Freya Johnson and Annalee Newitz. Though the self-reflexive prose can sometimes border on the intolerable, *Bad Subjects* more often than not is a reminder of the vital part that intellectually rigorous analysis plays in contemporary politics.

gerbil

www.multicom.org/gerbil/gerbil.htm

An in-your-face 'zine for lesbians and gays, the front page of *gerbil* warns self-mockingly that the site "contains Homosexuality, Dykes, Fags, stereotypes, Homos, apathy, sarcasm, nudity, sexually explicit writing, old queens, diesel dykes, and more." *gerbil* doesn't disappoint in any of these respects. The content is more cultural than political—Issue No. 8 includes an interview with Quentin Crisp and a paean to *Xena, Warrior Princess*—but *gerbil* is much better (and updated more frequently) than many other gay-themed sites of the same type, most of which tend to be either excessively salacious or mere brochures for their print counterparts. Overall, gays and lesbians have formed some of the most closely-knit communities on the Net. Gay and lesbian politics take center stage on sites ranging from *Shescape.com* (www.Shescape.com) to *Oasis* (www.oasismag.com), a 'zine for gay teens.

Living Marxism Online

www.informinc.co.uk

This online version of the British monthly *Living Marxism* provides access to back issues from March 1992 to the present. It contains challenging news articles and some excellent art criticism from the journal itself along with an interactive discussion forum. But be warned: The site's server is seemingly powered by tired squirrels in a rusty treadmill. By subscribing to *LM*'s e-mail list, you'll receive occasionally brilliant political rants—the journal's sharp commentaries on the death of Princess Diana, for instance. These days, however, the very mention of *LM* is controversial: The journal has been embroiled in a dispute surrounding Thomas Deichmann's February 1997 article "The picture that fooled the world," which questioned the fact that news footage of the Trnopolje "refugee camp" shot by the British network ITN in August 1992 showed that Bosnian Serbs were running a concentration camp. Such baffling editorial judgment taints this site, but, along with the Hate on the Net page (www.vir.com/Shalom/hatred.html), *Living Marxism Online* demonstrates the Web's power to give instant access to even the most noxious opinions.

WPA Life Histories

rs6.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpahome.html

Though not strictly a 'zine, this site can be an oasis from the disappointing state of contemporary discourse on the Web.

The Federal Writers' Project Life Histories site is a heartening reminder that new media need not rob us of our collective historical memory. The site is one collection among dozens in the Library of Congress's American Memory project (lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/). The Life Histories collection is largely text-based, but these printed transcriptions are a compelling example of ordinary people speaking across a great chronological divide. The collection represents a large but coherent sample of hundreds of thousands of WPA documents, including fascinating narratives like this one from Betty Burke, a meat-plant worker from Chicago: "In '34 they had me going like a clock 10 and 12 hours a day. I used to get home so tired I'd just sit down at the table and cry like a baby. That's where I was blacklisted. Some spy found out I was friendly to the union, you know. It took me a long time to catch on to why they kept laying me off." The site is a wonderful counterpoint to the diaries and drivel that predominate on personalized Web pages.

Zapatista Net of Autonomy & Liberation

www.actlab.utexas.edu/~zapatistas/index.html

There is an almost total dearth of fresh, functioning 'zines on the Net that deal with issues of race, colonialism, indigenous peoples and so forth. Minority artists and businesses are online in large numbers, but overall there's an absolutely shocking lack of minority political perspectives. The one cause that seems to have galvanized a sizable portion of Net

surfers is that of the Zapatistas. This site, which is located at the University of Texas, is a multimedia experiment inspired by the Zapatistas that pushes the envelope with sound samples, movie clips and cutting-edge plug-ins. Each visit to the site promises a different experience and allows for lots of reader participation.

Jay's Leftist and "Progressive" Internet Resources Directory

www.neravi.com/left/

Finally, it seems appropriate to mention something the Web does particularly well—providing long lists of links to other sites. To find more sites on progressive politics, skip the drudgery of sifting through search engines and simply bookmark Jay Moore's excellent directory. Moore, who lives in Vermont, makes his living teaching history and helping activists and nonprofits get their messages up on the Web. "I was radicalized as a college student at Michigan State by the Vietnam War and the Black Liberation Movement," says Moore, who describes his politics as "somewhere within the non-Leninist-Marxist/anarcho-communist/left-green/socialist-feminist nexus." Moore's site is updated frequently and features a "Web Site of the Week" and daily news links. For a sampling of different points on the political spectrum, try the Political Site of the Day (www.pennccn.com/psotd/). ■

Tom Dowe is an Austin-based freelance writer and a frequent contributor to Suck (www.suck.com).

Hypertext 2.0

The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology
second edition
George P. Landow

Landow's widely acclaimed *Hypertext* was the first book to bring together the worlds of literary theory and computer technology to explore the implications of giving readers easy access to a virtual library of sources as well as unprecedented control of what and how they read. Now, in this second edition, Landow shifts the focus to Microcosm, Storyspace, and the World Wide Web. He offers new, specific information about kinds of hypertext, different modes of linking, attitudes toward technology, and the proliferation of pornography and gambling on the Internet.

Landow points out that the concept 'hypertext' lets us test some concepts associated with critical theory, and gracefully shows how the technology is contributing to reconfigurations of text, author, narrative, and (literary) education. —*Post Modern Culture*, reviewing the first edition

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Can computer games be great literature? Do the rapidly evolving and culturally expanding genres of digital literature mean that the narrative mode of discourse—novels, films, television series—is losing its dominant position in our culture? Is it necessary to define a new aesthetics of cyborg textuality?

Perspectives on Ergodic Literature
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Campus Assassin

The Delicate Art of the Rifle

Directed by D.W. Harper

REVIEWED BY KEVIN O'KELLY

In August 1966, Charles Whitman, an architectural engineering student at the University of Texas, took a rifle and climbed to the top of the campus observation tower. From there, he gunned down 47 people before police shot and killed him.

This incident provides the inspiration for *The Delicate Art of the Rifle*, the first production of the Cambrai Liberation Collective (CLC Films), a group of four young filmmakers who met as students at North Carolina State University. Based on a short story that one of them wrote in an undergraduate creative-writing class, they shot the film on their own campus. This black comedy is both original and endearingly weird.

Completed in 1994, it picked up awards on the festival circuit, but didn't find a satisfactory distributor. Three years later, CLC teamed up with other independent filmmakers to create their own traveling film festival, the Fuel Film Tour. With the financial support of corporate sponsors including the Independent Film Channel, *The Delicate Art of the Rifle* and

three other independent films (*Alchemy*, *American Job* and *Arresting Gena*) opened in Raleigh, N.C., on October 1. The first run of the Fuel Film Tour covers 11 cities and concludes in Portland, Ore., at the end of October.

Rifle uses a series of shootings on a present-day college campus to structure a real-time narrative about a hapless undergraduate named Jay (David Grant). In the film's opening sequence, Jay wanders around the back corridors of the campus theater where he works. In one of the film's numerous interior monologues, Jay says how enthralled he is by the complexity of theatrical operations and the innumerable invisible labors that make a single night's performance possible.

Jay's own life is a catalogue of social and sexual frustrations. Talking to a the-

Jay (David Grant) ponders a classmate's cupcake in *The Delicate Art of the Rifle*.



ater co-worker, he's too engrossed in the smell of her clothes ("Surf with Snuggle Fabric Softener and Woolite on the sweater," he thinks to himself) to notice that she wants him to ask her out. His primary accomplishment appears to be his skill at *Cluster Invective*, a

popular virtual-reality warfare game. Like the rest of the student body, Jay is fixated on consumer goods. In the bleak environment of the modern university, consumer products are the only things that offer any human comfort. When he wants a Coke, he idly wonders if the beverage actually fuels the successes of American society.

As Jay walks across campus, shots ring out from the roof of his dormitory. Jay gapes in disbelief as people die all around him. Then Jay's roommate Walt (played by the movie's screenwriter, Stephen Grant) calls to him from the roof. Jay enters the dormitory to try to reach Walt, making his way, floor by floor, to the roof. Students huddle under overturned tables, the power has gone out, and an undergraduate pseudo-mili-

tia group has decided the time has come to act (though what they intend to do isn't clear).

For someone so practiced in looking behind the scenes, Jay takes a long time to figure out that his roommate Walt is the sniper. When Walt calls him from the roof, Jay assumes Walt is up there saving someone's life. When he makes it to the roof and Walt explains that the police are trying to get him "out from undercover," Jay still doesn't get it. "What are you doing dressed in all this army stuff? The cops are gonna think you're the guy," he says.

Of course, you can't entirely blame Jay for not cluing in to what is going on. All of the characters Jay encounters over the course of the day are lost in a plethora of surface details that cover up disturbing realities. Jay's beautiful classmate Sally (Suzanne Kratzer) obsessively decorates cupcakes. The intellectual achievement of the posturing faculty member Dr. Maxwell T. Boaz (John Kessel) seems limited to inventing the computer game *Cluster Invective*. Another fetching coed, Rachel Porter (Joy Gewalt), is too busy being a brilliant psychology student to question her mild exhibitionist streak or her self-subjection to sleep-deprivation experiments.

Walt has a lot in common with real-life sniper Charles Whitman. Both seem to be normal all-American guys—they're hard-working, intelligent and well-liked. They're both former eagle scouts. And they're both named Whitman.

Though Walt comes from a long line of military marksmen, his parents, having vague intellectual aspirations for their son, named him after the poet. Though *Song of Myself* is never explicitly mentioned in the movie, that hymn to the vibrance of American society is a thematic key to the film. Even as Whitman celebrates America's vitality and diversity, he has no illusions about the source of all that richness and achievement: It is a wellspring of energy that can just as easily erupt into violence.

Walt wants to carry on the family heritage. He enrolled in college to become a historian, and planned to write a book about the riflemen in his family, *The Delicate Art of the Rifle*. But when he

realizes that he may not get to write his book, he decides that the only way to continue the family tradition is to climb on the roof of his dormitory and shoot people.

The script, which won best screenplay at the 1996 Avignon Film Festival, is well-crafted, gliding effortlessly among moods of levity, rage and bewilderment. The direction perfectly complements the bleakness of the script. The dim lighting, vast spaces and cluttered rooms form a fitting visual counterpart to Jay's emotional and mental disjointedness.

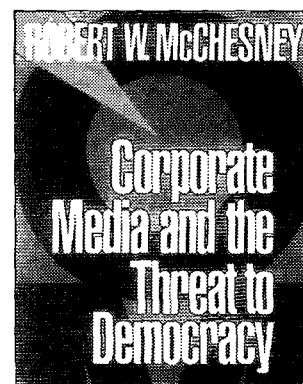
Like any first film, *Rifle* has minor failings. The sound is sometimes inaudible and the acting (all by newcomers) is occasionally off-key. The film's most serious flaw, however, is its heavy-handedness, particularly the beginning and ending sequences, which belabor the horrifying absurdity of Jay's world. But these typical shortcomings do not detract from the overall effectiveness of this dark yet unnervingly detached satire. ■

Kevin O'Kelly is a writer living in Carrboro, N.C.

Though Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* is never explicitly mentioned in the movie, that hymn to the vibrance of American society is a thematic key to the film.

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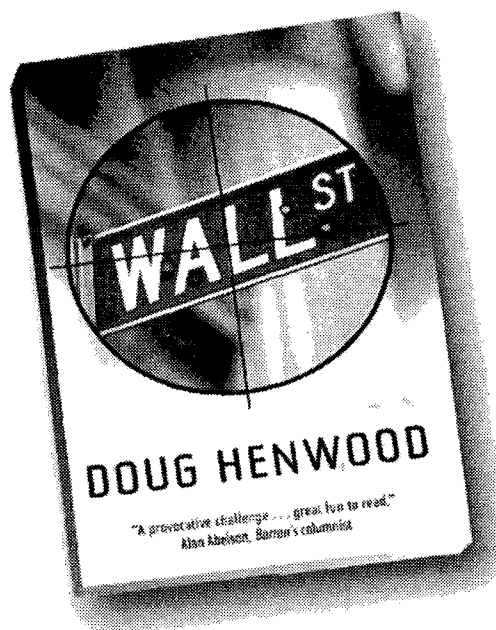
Wall Street

By Doug Henwood

Verso

372 pp., \$25

REVIEWED BY JAMES NORTH



Every few months, the *Wall Street Journal* pits a small group of highly paid financial experts against a dartboard. The *Journal* tosses its darts at a stock table and then asks the professional investors for their more considered stock recommendations. After the financial quarter passes, the random darts often have beaten the pros.

More substantively, money managers are regularly rated against the Standard & Poor's 500 index, which is a giant market average. Over the past three years, the S & P index has outperformed the experts. The *Journal's* usually dyspeptic editorial page does not go on to ask the obvious question: How can these smug, highly paid financial planners, stockbrokers and gurus advocating this or that investing method justify their prestige and wealth, when most of them cannot produce results that even tie the average? To use one of the sports metaphors they are so fond of, .199 hitters should get sent down to the minor leagues, not be rewarded with huge contracts.

Doug Henwood asks this kind of pointed question in his superb new book. Henwood, a New Yorker and student of high finance for more than two decades, has appeared regularly in the left press over the years and puts out a superior, indispensable newsletter, *Left Business Observer*. "It's rare," he writes, "that someone should develop an

obsession with Wall Street without sharing its driving passion, the accumulation of money."

Wall Street is not an easy book. Henwood is a gifted writer, good at explaining, pungent where necessary, and he includes the same kind of useful charts that grace his newsletter. But high finance has grown extraordinarily complex as Wall Streeters have developed new financial instruments to gamble with along with complex rationales to justify their use. So Henwood's work is inevitably dense. Even so, the book is so good that the difficult parts are worth rereading. The volume will serve as a classic reference for years to come.

Wall Street appears at the right time. High finance has probably not been this arrogant since the spring and summer of 1929. What makes the Wall Street gamblers so annoying is that not only are they—for now—multiplying their money overnight, but they also insist that their lucrative activities are in the best interests of the rest of us. They maintain that they are thoughtful investors whose purchases of stocks and bonds provide promising businesses the funds to expand. Carefully monitored by a vigorous financial press, companies function efficiently because they are subject to the quasi-democratic control of the marketplace.

Henwood sets out his rebuttal: "The

U.S. financial system performs dismally at its advertised task, that of efficiently directing society's savings towards their optimal investment pursuits. The system is stupefyingly expensive, gives terrible signals for the allocation of capital, and has surprisingly little to do with real investment." He goes on: "Behind the abstraction known as 'the markets' lurks a set of institutions designed to maximize the wealth and power of the most privileged group of people in the world, the creditor-rentier class of the First World and their junior partners in the Third."

Over the next 300 pages, Henwood proves his contention. He starts with a readable field guide to financial instruments; stocks and bonds have been joined by a vast new array of futures, options and derivatives. Then he turns to the "players," dissecting the traders and bankers. He explains the Federal Reserve Bank and hedge funds, and he shows the markets in action with a lively snapshot of a week of trading in May 1994.

Along the way, he makes one telling point after another:

- Stock markets are *not* important sources of new investment; corporations finance 90 percent of their growth with their own internal funds.
- The number of people who have money in the stock market is *not* overwhelming—only about one-fifth of the

population own stock, and a good portion of them own just one stock.

◦ The financial press is *not* clever, incisive and unbiased, but rather acts as unreflective cheerleaders. One journalist, John Liscio, formerly of *Barron's*, told Henwood, "Financial writers and even columnists refuse to think for themselves. ... Whatever the moron economists and analysts tell the financial press gets smeared across the page. There's no filter."

When Henwood turns to the economic theory behind finance, his writing is detailed and complex but well worth the effort. He resurrects the thinking of British economist John Maynard Keynes (an earlier breaker of classical economic idols who was also a biting stylist). Approvingly he summarizes Keynes' theory of capitalist investment: "Asset prices are powered by wild swings of temperament, the volatile judgments of an ignorant herd, and these noisy signals guide real investment, to the detriment of prosperity. Markets are populated by dispersed investors with little knowledge of the real businesses they own or lend money to."

Those sympathetic to Henwood's arguments up to this point may disagree when he discusses the need for large-scale corporate structures. "Big multinationals," he asserts, "may be too large on social and political grounds, if not economic ones, but there's no way to sustain an industrial society without something like the corporate form." It would have been helpful if he had elaborated further on this contention in anticipation of the inevitable squawks from people who idealize small, community-based producer cooperatives. But he is right, at least to some extent. It is hard to see how a jet airplane, a pharmaceutical cure for AIDS or even a cassette tape could exist without some form of production larger than the neighborhood workshop.

Over the past couple of decades, the financial sector has greatly increased its power over how big enterprises are governed. Back in the '50s and '60s, the top managers (along with the owners, in many cases) controlled corporations, a state of affairs noted—and, to some extent, celebrated—in books such as

John Kenneth Galbraith's *The New Industrial State*.

But today, the top people at places like IBM and General Motors have less room to maneuver. They have to worry first and foremost about the price of their stock; if it stagnates, their jobs could be in jeopardy, and their own compensation, usually linked to the stock price, will suffer. So they fire masses of workers and take other harsh steps to win favor among Wall Street analysts and brokers, who now have significant influence over how much their stock sells for. Their big downsizings are promptly rewarded with a jump in price.

Henwood is deeply skeptical about various efforts to "reform" Wall Street. Noting that pension funds own huge blocks of stock, he writes that, although some make anti-management noises, "their agenda ... looks much less radical than the rhetoric." The "pension fund socialism" that some observers once predicted has turned out to be a mirage, as fund managers play the same Wall Street game as everybody else—scrambling to boost their portfolio values before the next financial quarter rather than seeking out sensible, longer-term investments.

What Henwood would like to do is eliminate Wall Street shareholders altogether. The stock market, he writes, is "either irrelevant or harmful to real economic activity," and "counts for little or nothing as a source of finance." He concludes, "Shareholders *should* be vestigial; they have no useful role. Instead, they have grown increasingly assertive over the last 15 or 20 years, disguising themselves behind a rhetoric of democracy, independence and accountability."

Ultimately, Henwood advocates that

stock markets shrink in power and that large enterprises be controlled by their workers and financed by publicly owned banks that are run on social principles. But as the world stock markets continue to shoot upward, he recognizes that finance capitalists are hardly on the verge of extinction.

He offers some intermediate proposals, including reinstating government controls on capital flows and raising taxes on great wealth. Another interesting idea is "transactions" taxes—small levies on trades of currencies, securities and futures. Such a tax could help stabilize the world economy, could raise money for national and international projects and would cost the average person nothing. This tax would not deter the Joneses from buying stocks for their retirement or Farmer Brown from hedging a corn crop, but it would slow down the firm of Speculator & Gambler from betting hundreds of millions of dollars every day, which Henwood calls "pointless or malignant financial hyperactivity."

It is a tribute to the ideological power of finance capital that transactions taxes, although they have the approval of sober economists, are not even being discussed. But the proposal to privatize Social Security, which Henwood eviscerates as "a truly horrible idea," receives serious and detailed attention. This imbalance in the debate will not change right away (unless a market crash suddenly discredits the big financiers). But Henwood's excellent book at least starts to redress it. ■

James North is a writer who lives in New York City. His next book, Structures of Sin, is about growing global inequality.

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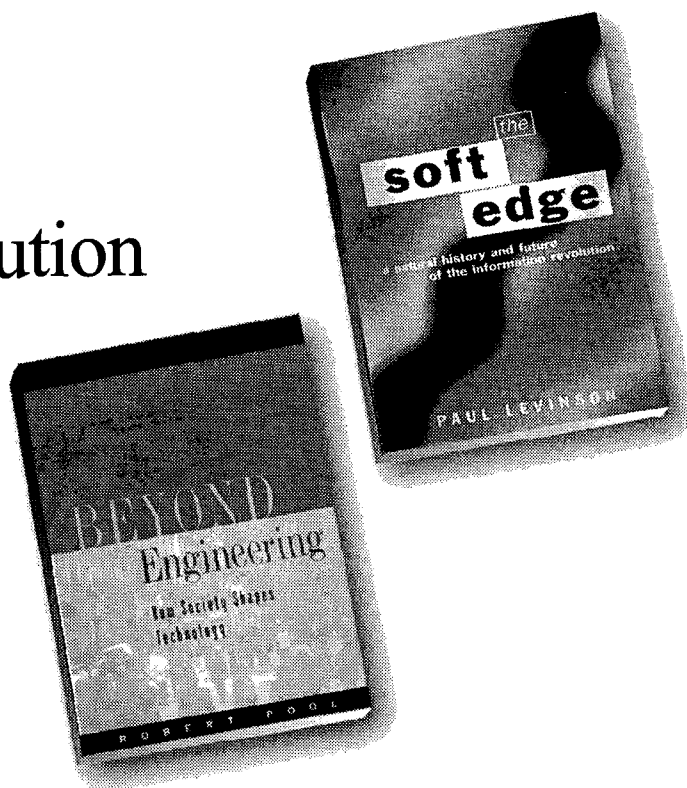
Tracking Technological Evolution

Beyond Engineering: How Society Shapes Technology

By Robert Pool
Oxford University Press
358 pp., \$30

The Soft Edge: A Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution

By Paul Levinson
Routledge
257 pp., \$25



REVIEWED BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

In the early '90s, the Internet seemed, in both a technical and social sense, revolutionary. It promised the chance to build homemade, noncommercial networks across great distances without having to worry about time zones and sleep habits—and it was practically free (once you had a computer and a phone). It also promised unprecedented freedom from gatekeepers.

But as the pioneering phase of cyberspace reaches an end, the landscape looks very different. The “backbone” of the network has been fully privatized. Successful Net-based businesses such as virtual bookstore amazon.com are springing up. Internet service providers are now toying with the idea of long-distance-like usage fees.

This shakedown of the cyberspace “revolution” once again raises the question of why technologies take the shape they do. Two recent books rebut the commonplace notion that inventors come up with ideas so compelling that society naturally grabs hold, and history is thereby changed.

In *Beyond Engineering*, science journalist Robert Pool highlights the non-technical forces—the historical, political, cultural, organizational, economic and

psychological factors—that influence the path a technology takes. “To truly understand why a technology developed as it did, we must look past the ideas and engineering choices and put them in some sort of context,” Pool writes. “Who were the inventors? What were their strengths and weaknesses, and how did they interact with their peers and rivals? What was going on in the world outside the laboratory? Did the government weigh in? The media? What sorts of organizations did the inventors work in? How did business factors influence the development and marketing of the innovation?”

Pool uses stories to dramatize his point that technology adoption is a social matter. Internal combustion engines, he argues, won out over steam engines in cars not because the former were technologically superior. The steamers were killed off because the Stanley brothers who manufactured them had little interest in mass production and because of a series of unlucky breaks.

Pool considers economic, political and technological factors, assessing each without daring a conclusion as decisive as the one that Brian Winston comes to in his 1986 book *Misunder-*

standing Media. In his definitive survey of satellites, computers, television and telephones, Winston argues that the history of communications technologies shows that corporate interests that benefit most from the status quo suppress real technological innovation. By contrast, Pool finds multiple authors and idiosyncratic histories without uncovering a larger pattern. Furthermore, he never really leaves behind his love affair with engineering. In his analysis, civic and environmental organizations are fearful, sometimes irrationally risk-averse organizations—which is just as corporations like Chevron and their engineers portray them.

But Pool does strike a cautionary note. In recent decades, technology development has become more complex, less predictable and filled with risks, Pool warns. Society is not geared for the equally complex task of evaluating and monitoring that such technology requires. His most compelling example is nuclear power. Federal policies, he writes, are not driven by risk assessment but by defense considerations and the interests of utility companies.

Pool would like society to benefit from the best that science has to offer in an

open and democratic decision-making process. In light of the dangers, the book's sketchy proposal sounds weakly well-intentioned at best. Pool's conclusion that we need more sophisticated social engineering, rather than a challenge to power relations, is particularly unsatisfying.

In *The Soft Edge*, teacher and consultant Paul Levinson examines the development of information technology from a different vantage point than Pool. The head of an organization that offers graduate courses on the Internet, Levinson believes that new communications technologies evolve in ways that both mimic and serve the sensory habits of human beings (hence his subtitle, "a natural history"). "All media," he writes, "eventually become more human in their performance—that is, they facilitate communication that is increasingly like the ways humans process information 'naturally,' or prior to the advent of given media."

Ranging from the invention of the alphabet to the ascendance of the Internet, Levinson traces how media and communications technologies evolve in ways appropriate to human experience. Radio, for instance, survived in the television era while silent pictures disappeared with talkies because, he explains, human beings have plenty of normal experience with sightless sound (for instance, in the dark) while soundless moving images seem alien. Levinson calls "soft determinism" the modus operandi of his book. "It is a system of making things possible—of the result not being able to occur without the technology—rather than the technology inevitably and unalterably creating that result," he writes.

All human technologies, he argues, are incarnations of ideas. Media technologies emerge from a concept of what communication should be and what technology should do to make it happen. The Internet, for Levinson, is the incarnation of a revolutionary idea of an abundant, cheap and ubiquitous medium that offers new ways to learn.

Levinson ridicules government regulation of electronic technology, from radio to the Internet. His scathing indictment of the Communications De-

cency Act (CDA)—a law easy to despise—is now moot, since the Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional in July. While it's easy to ridicule the CDA, it's hard to ignore cyber-issues that call for protection through legislation: privacy, commercial access to vulnerable populations such as children, and illegal and antisocial activities on the Net. It is folly to argue, as Levinson does, that corporations on the Net should be free of consumer regulation or policies encouraging public and democratic uses of the medium.

Although they make different arguments and both avoid breathy rhetoric about shifting paradigms, the two authors share a common weakness. They discount perhaps the single most powerful and controlling social force driving technology's evolution: the corporate culture of capitalist enterprises. Pool, for instance, does not lay responsibility for the Bhopal, India, disaster squarely at the feet of Union Carbide. He describes the deadly chemical leak as a "child of many fathers," a product of complexity. (He does, at least, admit that Union Carbide was disgracefully lax in safety standards and guilty of penny-pinching.) Levinson's denouncement of government regulation of broadcasting ignores how commercial interests have decisively shaped radio and TV. Broadcasters took a public resource with as much potential for grass-roots networking as the Internet has today, and turned it into an advertisers' junkyard. For decades, near-toothless government regulators entreated broadcasters to include a little community service and a little news; now, even those regulations have been scrapped.

Eleven years ago, in *Misunderstanding Media*, Winston charted the ways large communications corporations used new technologies to fit their agendas and minimize change. He called the pattern "the suppression of radical potential." Cyberspace today is a good example of this pattern. Yesterday's free-wheeling Internet has already become obsolete, and tomorrow's is being built in a ruthless corporate environment. Phone companies are doing everything in their power to block competitors. Their recent attacks on Internet service providers go hand in hand with

their own plans to offer Internet access—and limit competition.

Meanwhile John Malone, head of cable giant Tele-Communications, Inc. (TCI), media mogul Rupert Murdoch and Microsoft's Bill Gates are all developing interactive systems and services. In different ways, their plans involve proprietary technologies and codes designed to wed consumers to their company's products and services. They all intend to use technology that makes it much easier to send information to users than for users to participate in a wide-open network. That would put a significant crimp into the dream of grass-roots, gatekeeper-free information.

None of this commercial development is going to be cheap. As government subsidies dry up, user fees—from the growth of pay TV to higher e-mail rates—will have to cover costs. There are pressing issues of accessibility. Will your neighborhood be redlined when the phone company lays down new fiber-optic wire? Will state utilities regulators make sure that schools and libraries get cheap Internet access? Issues of content and control also loom large. Will the Web be home to noxious new forms of advertising that prey on kids? Will public domains be beautiful or will they be wastelands inviting private takeover? Will your credit rating be public property, and will your catalog purchase of those khakis become part of somebody's private database?

Clearly, government has a role to play in cultivating democratic uses of the Internet, including broadening public access, making government documents available online and furnishing cyberspaces for learning, the exchange of ideas and the shaping of culture on non-commercial terms.

Rather more useful on these issues than either of these current books would be a return to Steve Miller's thoughtful presentation of cyberspace issues from a social justice and equity viewpoint in *Civilizing Cyberspace*. And it wouldn't hurt to check out Web sites like the Benton Foundation (www.benton.org) or the Electronic Policy Network (www.cme.org), where you can plug into movements to expand the virtual public domain. ■

More Cyberspace Books



Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life

Edited by Jennifer Terry and Melodie Calvert
Routledge
248 pp., \$18.95

REVIEWED BY PAT ARNOW

This collection of 23 essays and excerpts from digital art projects emphasizes that cyberspace is no *tabula rasa*. The new medium is inscribed with all the inequities imbedded in the non-virtual world. "The lines of the 'frontier' and 'colonization' engraved deeply long ago map themselves unapologetically onto new cyberskin," writes one contributor, video and film teacher Margaret Morse.

The other technologies examined here—some of them mighty peculiar—are also laden with sexism, the authors find. Even though white women report most alien abductions, films almost always portray men as abductees, writes artist and art professor Connie Samaras in her UFO analysis.

"The Visible Man," the executed murderer who became the much-studied human anatomy model, has a name and identity. "The Visible Woman" remains an anonymous 59-year-old housewife, points out English professor Lisa Cartwright.

History Professor Evelyn M. Hammonds dissects *Time* and *Newsweek's* cover stories on race illustrated with "morphed" images—photos that have been digitally mixed to create new people. "This is truly the drama of miscegenation in cyberspace," she writes. "Female reproduction is replaced by a masculine technophilic reproduction because stereotypical racial typologies remain in place."

Compiled from presentations at the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, the anthology suffers with the unevenness common in such collections, but the subject matter is intriguing and there are gems of originality for those willing to dig. ■

What's at Stake 2: Defining the public interest in the digital age

Benton Foundation
16 pp. pamphlet
Free

REVIEWED BY PAT ARNOW

With colorful graphics that look like computer icons, this Benton Foundation pamphlet proselytizes for universal access to computers to convert everyone in the nation into better-educated, healthier, more politically active citizens.

Founded as a legacy to the owner of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the Benton Foundation promotes communications in the public interest. A follow-up to last year's publication, the new *What's at Stake* "extends Benton's examination of public interest issues in the digital age." (Both *What's at Stake 1* and *2* are available on Benton's Web site, www.benton.org, or by calling 202-638-5770.)

While Benton delivers a hopeful message (under its name is the slogan, "communications that delivers social change"), it can't put a happy face on the 1996 Telecommunications Act. "One year after President Clinton signed the law that was supposed to bring competition to the telecommunications industry, consumers have yet to see many tangible benefits," the report says.

While the report notes the growing gap in access to communications technology, elsewhere it glows with fervor.

'Grateful Med [online research system] was a godsend to our family,' says [Jean] Hoffman-Anuta. 'Every American should have the right to explore the latest medical information, as should our health professionals.'

The brief sketches of grass-roots efforts, civic journalism and advocacy work for universal participation in the information age makes this publication useful for public policy advocates who want to persuade luddite legislators and other powers-that-be that everybody must get wired. ■

Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace

By Laura Gurak
Yale University Press
181 pp., \$25

REVIEWED BY AMANDA HIBER

Two mass protests in cyberspace over measures that would have significantly interfered with privacy are the focus of *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*. In 1990, Lotus Marketplace canceled its plan to supply direct-mail marketers with the names, addresses and spending histories of 120 million Americans after irate consumers, who organized online, flooded the company with calls and letters. And in 1994, in the name of national security, the federal government forged ahead with a plan for the Clipper Chip, a decoding device that can decrypt messages sent over phone lines, even though 40,000 people signed an online petition in protest.

Laura Gurak, a professor of rhetoric at the University of Minnesota, traces the history of the online "communities" which formed in response to each plan. She discusses the similarities and differences in the protest strategies in an effort to understand why one succeeded and the other failed.

While the stories are well-told, and the exploration into the rhetoric used in cyberspace is interesting and accessible, Gurak never explores the issues of corporate/governmental power versus individual freedom that undergird privacy issues. Nor does she discuss the significance of the outcomes of the protests for future privacy rights.

Despite the missing pieces, Gurak provides a coherent picture of the dynamics of online culture and the sorts of communities that can form in cyberspace. ■

Amanda Hiber is a freelance writer based in Chicago

Classifieds

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Continued from page 38

and already dark, the streets nearly deserted. On all sides, the blank faces of empty storefronts stared back at us. Over coffee, we again considered the 126 violations. Old pipes. Erratic sprinklers. Cracked sidewalks. Elevators that came too slowly and left too soon. Stairways that had taken people up and down for decades suddenly declared too narrow. "And who knows what else?" said the manager. "They go back to 1978." He made it sound like an eternity. We had to hire someone just to research the violations—a former building inspector who would get \$100 per violation just to tell us what we had to fix. "Now remember," said the manager, "that's \$12,600 just for the research."

"How much will it cost to actually fix it all?" I asked.

"I wish I knew, kiddo."

The drizzly day, the dark storefronts, my confusion over being a landlord, the terror of losing the property, the 126 violations, the ex-inspector, the smiling property manager I couldn't quite bring myself to trust—it all just crashed in on me for a minute. I felt rage at my father for leaving us so ignorantly unprepared. I hated him for "protecting" us all those years. In the next instant, I yearned for the American-dream story I was brought up with: My father's mother, who at age 14 escaped illegally out of Russia, supported herself in the sewing sweatshops of New York City. In the kitchen, she hung up a portrait of Eugene V. Debs, and the old socialist looked down hopefully while my father went to college during the Depression, started his accounting practice, moved out of Bedford-Stuyvesant to Flushing, Queens, and leveraged \$10,000, risking a million in debt, to buy himself a piece of Wall Street.

"Morty is expecting us," said the manager. Morty. The bag shop. The oldest tenant. The worst visit of all.

The store reeked of failure. It had a dusty, abandoned feeling, as though Morty, in his 70s, and his son, nearing 50, hadn't left the place in 20 years. Why don't they just give it up, I wondered. I could hardly think about the awful lack of choice that kept them sitting here year after year, asking for rent reductions as their livelihood slipped away.

"It's the modems," said Morty.

What? Did he actually say this, or did I dream it? Was someone really going to talk to me about operating systems?

"Did you say modems, Morty?"

"Yeah. It's the modems. Used to be nice vice presidents took the train down from the East Side or in from Scarsdale. Now and then they bought a bag, a wallet, a briefcase." He folded his hands over his belly and leaned back against the shelves behind the counter. "Now the managers sit home in Connecticut. They don't pay city taxes, and they don't buy bags. They telecommute, they call it."

He stopped, rubbed his arm. "Even the stock market is talking about moving away now. It's the modems, I tell you."

I peered over at Morty, whom I'd never seen clearly before. This round old man in his empty store, for whom I'd never felt anything but pity, had just told me off in ways he could not imagine. He put it all together: the computer systems I built, the networks I installed, the electronic transactions I helped send circling around the world—all that was suddenly and

clearly related to the world's financial center now all emptied of people. *It's the modems*: computing as a kind of neutron bomb, making all the people disappear, leaving the buildings.

In my world, it's so easy to forget the empty downtowns. The whole profession encourages us: Stay here, alone, by this nifty color monitor. Everything you want: just a click away. Forget the actual cities, where real buildings change at the pace of generations. Forget the merchants in their empty stores. Morty and his son should just set themselves up on the Internet. Let them make their sales with e-cash. Then let them wire-transfer me the rent in dustless, encrypted, secure, anonymous transactions. Click: It's hardly money at all, but some new measure of value—logical, dematerialized, clean. Then I can forget the ancient violations and struggling tenants. Forget that, as landlord, as Netsurfing citizen, as programmer helping to unpeople buildings like my own, I am implicated in the fate of Morty and the bag shop.

"You know," I said, picking up a wallet, "I think I need a new one." "Morty'll give you a nice discount," said the property manager, smiling. Morty was not smiling and did not offer me a discount. I put down the wallet. "Maybe next time," I said. ■

Ellen Ullman is a software engineer who writes about her profession. Her essays have appeared in *Resisting the Virtual Life*, *Wired Women* and *Harper's*. This article is adapted from her book *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents*, forthcoming from City Lights Books.

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By Ellen Ullman

It suddenly dawned on me that the computer systems I built were related to a downtown now all emptied of people.

"Talk to me about operating systems," I said to the property manager.

"I wish I could, sweetheart."

"What do I know about real estate? I'm a software engineer. So talk to me about software."

"You know I can't, sweetheart."

I looked over at my sister. Since the death of our father two years before, we'd become partners in the terrors of financial liability, which has a way of making people surprisingly close. "What do I know about this stuff?" I asked her.

My sister, the property manager and I sat in a freezing basement restaurant in lower Manhattan. The stuff in question was a stack of papers that described, in great and incomprehensible detail, 126 arcane violations of the New York City building code. When my father died, he left the family two small commercial buildings in the Wall Street area. The buildings were old and beginning to bleed us slowly. All that stood between us and our complete ignorance of real estate was the property manager, a man with the relentless, cheerful smoothness of a salesman, which made me distrust him implicitly. But our father told us almost nothing about his business dealings. All we knew was that we'd inherited the properties and the property manager along with them.

"You have to make a decision, girls. They won't sign the lease if we don't clear the violations." The property manager paused for effect. "Then we'll have empty storefronts."

Empty storefronts: This was how the manager constantly scared us. Our buildings were around the corner from the New

York Stock Exchange. When my father bought them, in 1961, they were in the very center of the capitalist world. Our "good" property was by the subway, where every morning legions of men in perfect blue suits once swarmed up the stairs and into the brokerages, onto the trading floors and up into the high rises. They hired managers and assistants, secretaries and clerks, all of whom emerged at lunch hour to eat and to buy handbags, shoes, dresses, suits, watches and knives. Then came the stock market crash of 1987. Then the New York real estate crash, then its recession. Now, all around our building, empty storefronts.

"The tenants are waiting for us," said the manager. My sister and I hated these ritual meetings with the tenants. They forced us to acknowledge what we were and had been all those long years of our ignorance: landlords.

We started on the upper floors. The office tenants were mostly Russian immigrants, refugees from the command economy, running odd, suspect businesses like training seminars and health foods in a pouch. On the ground floor were the stores: a tiny jeweler, a magazine stand, a shoe store, a dress store and a bag shop. Some had been tenants for 25 years. Almost all were behind on their rent. "What'll we do, kick them out?" said the manager. "At least we don't have empty storefronts." My sister and I exchanged looks. We decided to put off the stores, in all their threatened emptiness, until after coffee.

We walked through a steady, cold drizzle. It was afternoon

Continued on page 37